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AN HOUR WITH AMERICAN MUSIC

by
PAUL ROSENFELD



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TO JEAN TOOMER

By the Same Author

THE BOY IN THE SUN
A NOVEL

BY WAY OF ART
DISCOVERIES IN MODERN MUSIC, LITERATURE, ETC.

PORT OF NEW YORK
ESSAYS ON FOURTEEN AMERICAN MODERNS

MEN SEEN
ESSAYS ON MODERN LITERATURE

MUSICAL CHRONICLE, 1916-1923
LIFE FOCUSED IN OUR CONCERT HALLS

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AN HOUR WITH AMERICAN
MUSIC

I

JAZZ AND MUSIC: MUSIC IN AMERICA

AMERICAN music is not jazz. Jazz is not music. Jazz remains a striking indigenous product, a small, sounding folk-chaos, counterpart of other national developments. What we call *music*, however, is a force, adjusted to the stream of the world in which materials float and elements play, and active like them upon the human situation; and, bold and debonair as it is, seductive with woodwind in minor thirds and fuller of bells than a bayadere, our characteristic "dance-music" is cheerfully quiescent. Foxtrot and charleston, its special figures, have supplied several ultramodern composers with happy motives—Milhaud, Copland, Hindemith, Chavez, Auric, among others. So, too, its novel instrumental effects; since jazz composers have been ingenious in combining timbres savoursomely. It may, conceivably, contain a spirit in embryo, the palpitancy, the peculiar giddy,

half erotic bobbing, possibly announcing a state of levity bound to make much of our old solemnity seem impotence. Yet, in itself, jazz, or rathermore what the great run of our commercial musicians continue to produce with their material, their themes and instruments, has changed nothing in the human environment. On the contrary, it has let everything sit.

Beneath its superficial irregularity, snap and go, the best of jazz stands inert. Rhythm is precluded, not permitted to develop itself in its hard-boiled sphere. In place of truly rhythmic, periodical, unpredictable displacement of volumes and accents intrinsic to phrases and freely flowing periods capable of organic extension and development, the typical jazz composition offers mere beat; mechanic iteration, duplication, conformation to pre-established pattern. Its alternation of bars of three and four and five units, the so-called jazz polyrhythm, is sheer willful contrast and change. The chief excitement in it proceeds from a series of jerks,

systematic anticipations and retardations of the arbitrary, regular, unfailing beat.

For jazz heartily and consistently violates the identity of its medium: the sonority of instruments. Rhythm, manner of being and of moving, is as intrinsic to the material of the artist, whether that of tone or of colour, language or granite, as it is to the artist himself; to be produced only through the free sympathetic relationship of man and thing, craftsman and medium. But in jazz, there is no penetration of the subject stuff, no empathy, no union of the man and the matter, no tension. Tremendously dolled up, the core of jazz is prearrangement, repetition, succession. Metric schemes inflexible as all preconceptions, are arbitrarily imposed on the means and the artist; and to dictate is to exploit. As for the jazz melodies, they are largely synthetic, either inappropriate arrangements of old, tried matter dredged up from the more sentimental European romantics, or not too danger-

ously novel recombinations of phrases of jazz and other popular compositions.

This sharp denial of the stream of things and the conditions under which materials exist and forces move, is not only symbolical. Jazz's first blare revives the lure of ready-made elysiums. Sparkling as a soda-fountain, the blissful region rises amid its pebbly beats, luxurious, immediate as the dancefloor, apparently no less easily accessible than some smart clothes and a complacent embrace. Merely to let go and to pass in is to attain apotheosis. The saxophone says so, insinuating and enveloping; and reserve and ponderation, discrimination of the identity of things and the conditions shaping us, all indeed making for tensivity, discomfort and pathos, suddenly become the folly of the living dead. Smoothness of enamel, gaiety of flowery dresses, airiness of speed are there for the mere taking, or the inconsiderable price of a little willingness, a little cash and snap. The "not impossible she," or he, is at hand in a thousand

persons. There are myriads of persons, each one the one—here where existence is canoeing down flowing blue and sailing on ocean breezes and throbbing in the pink of a perpetual spasm: hard, assured, winning people, decided and smart as the cut of straight limbs, youthful with earth's sweetest bloom; and at night (the urgent trumpet swears it) the cars are sapient glow worms transporting rapturous pairs through moving spaces.

Precisely that is the function of jazz, its great *raison d'être*. Jazz is an "entertainment"; and an entertainment, in very simplest Bœotian, is something which temporarily removes people from contact with the realities. Perhaps it is a little ungracious of us, to analyze what, like an entertainment, pretends merely to please? But we have here to do with an extraordinarily popular drug-like use of the materials of sound; and it is certainly not for mere purposes of disparagement that we seek to explain its prevalency by reminding ourselves that the great number

of men are incapacitated for either a large or consistent acceptance of the world, the stream of things, the conditions of existence. Yearning for a new life potential between them and the world appears too weak or too non-existent to reconcile them with conditions making life possible. Unable to grant a satisfactory embrace, reality seems merely cruel, merely treacherous, merely tragically hazardous; and satisfaction to lie only in security from its caprices. This is sought in the ostrich-like act of disorientation and disarticulation by which man withdraws from contact with materials and people into himself. The illusion of an established, waiting, easily accessible apotheosis is consequent of it. For how could retreat, and the revivification of past experiences, the repetition of familiar ideas and habitual gestures following it, be attended by anything but feelings of a dissolving sweetness? They weaken the lure of the actual, so baleful to weak passions, do they not? and dissipate tension? In other days, this

sort of exercise was amply given by religious practices. At present, particularly in America, it is provided by "politics," "all the news that's fit to print," Florida, Hollywood, the rest of Southern California, "the education of our children," "sophisticated" fiction and above all, by jazz. The heaven our exercises offer, has merely become a little more sensual, a little more earthly than that of the middle ages, something like the Mohammedans'. That is because in many ways it is merely the intensification of the fictitious world in which most people consistently dwell. No doubt, the American exercises focussing it possess much of the snap-piness of the civilization to which they bring relief. Jazz, for example, embodies a knack with materials. It is smart; superficially alert, good humoured, and cynical. Essentially, nonetheless, it is just another means of escape.

What we term music, the representative work, say, of Bach and Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner and Brahms, primarily

is what jazz from the beginning is not: the product of a sympathetic treatment of the sonorous medium. *Music* is a chain of temporal volumes released by sensitive manipulation of an instrument. Music has rhythm, indeed, each piece of it has its own way of flowing, its own logic of temporal volumes not to any degree mechanical, or identical with the motion of another thing, even one of its own species. In works like the last sonatas and quartets of Beethoven, the fantasies and fugues of Bach, *Tristan und Isolde* of Wagner, the logic is so universal that we have the impression these pieces existed since the beginning of the world, and must persist till doomsday. Still, no matter how special it may be, the piece of music is never stationary or disintegral. You cannot arrest a composition midway without disturbing a balance. Moreover, the accents are intrinsic to the phrases; and the phrases themselves develop from the initial idea, theme, or quality of sonority, freely; in conformity with a

law which we can recognize after the piece is done, but cannot predict. For pieces of music, when they do not involve literature and try to tell stories, are compositions *for* the violin, *for* the piano, *for* the orchestra, reverend of these identities; born of a sort of auscultation or penetration of the means and themes, of a sympathy between the man and the instrument or material, a subtly following adjustment of his will to that of things. They are never the product of preconceived schemes or mechanical beats or mathematical formulæ arbitrarily imposed. What if they do bear the names of fugue and lied, sonata and fantasy? These names are little besides rough significations of genera and species. Musical art is spontaneous and original, the reverend adjustment of sonorous means to new conditions, new states of being, new experiences. Not only are no two fugues of Bach, no two sonatas of Beethoven, no two fantasies of Chopin or Schumann identical as wholes, or, for the

overwhelming part, in their phrases. In many cases, they radically vary the type to which they belong. Many musicians have indeed established their own forms, their own types: Haydn the binary form, Beethoven the scherzo, Schubert the dramatic lied, Wagner the structural opera or music-drama. But, whether radical in norm or not, they are each autonomous, showing evidence of a spontaneous and original, uncalculated and uninduced approach to the medium. No doubt, there are compositions, the clavier and organ works of Handel, for example, whose interest is slight for the reason that they are little besides talented manipulations of a means. And there are others, the piano pieces of Brahms, perhaps, whose interest is large in the face of a none too sympathetic approach to the keyboard. Still, penetration of the medium and its individual nature and way of being and moving, in the spirit of the moment and mood, is prerequisite.

And music cuts away the foundations

of ready-made elysiums. Music is expressive, carrying us out of ourselves and beyond ourselves, into impersonal regions, into the stream of things; permitting us to feel the conditions under which objects exist, the forces playing upon human life. In conformity to the terms of materials, each piece of music has not only thingness, continuity of texture and "a beginning and a middle and an end." To some degree, consequent to the state of the composer at the time of composition, it contains and communicates a rich pathos. Musical art's fundamental acceptance of the identity and limitations of its medium is not, by any means, consent in the conditions of a mere fragment of the world. The medium is the microcosm, the splinter of Ygdrasil shot with the grain of the all; and the embrace of it, the consent in its identity, the acceptance of its law of motion, the recognition of the whole in the fragment, involves adjustment to the great rolling universe. Hence, we are *moved* by music, find it expressive and

full of feeling. For to live, to merge with the stream and become part of forces larger than ourselves, is to feel, to know something about the entire world; and the music lets us share in a great man's absorption: at least to the degree to which we are capable of being lost to ourselves. Indeed, musical literature embodies a tremendous gamut of intuitions, from deepest sorrow to highest joy, in combinations as individual as its combinations of the tones of the scale. Graver feelings preponderate in the work of certain composers, Bach and Brahms for example, and lighter feelings in that of Haydn and Mozart. Still, without exception, the representative pieces of the chief composers present irreproducible harmonies of the pathetic palette, opposing, balancing and conciliating the elementary intuitions much as great experience of life itself does.

To call Bach's music the soul of Protestantism, Beethoven's the affirmation of man's nature, Wagner's the gospel of a

religion of love, and Debussy's the sensuous embrace of the cosmos, is very roughly to indicate the immense effect music has exercised on our environment. Together with painting and the novel, perhaps even more grandly than either of its sister arts, music has recently been tending to supplant formal religion. It is not without profound reason that Martin Luther, himself more of an adaptator than a composer of original music, figures perennially in musical histories. The art he cultivated in his leisure has proven more active in his profounder intention than the dogma he laboriously established; meditating between the individual and the universe. Indeed, with her immense flexibility, her semi-materialism, her direct address to feeling, Frau Musica has been more subtly, immediately revelatory of the ever-moving, unpredictable something at the core of life than a fixed dogma could ever be. Her immense responsiveness to the curve, the way, the law of things, has actually sustained the

individuals capable of larger, subtler, more sensitive harmony with the invisible forces. (One could scarcely imagine modern idealism deprived of Mozart and Beethoven and Wagner.) For, like all art, music itself is an act, an offspring, of potency, of pregnancy with fresh spirit and life; therefore the director and ally of all that is able to adjust to things and move beyond itself in new embodiments. The musician's acceptance of the conditions of existence, of inevitable tragedy and extinction, so abhorrent to the jazz-artist and the jazz public; his very delight in a "Creation" almost indifferent to man: what is that but the act of the creature strongly impelled, strongly loaded with the seeds of life, full of yearning for the thing imminent between him and the world; bound to find his cosmic partner, his instrument, satisfactory—mortality, failure and final extinction notwithstanding; and everything for the best, in what may even prove the worst of possible worlds?

Not only the effects of music are loud in their testimony of its origin. The personal developments that have accompanied its appearance declare it plainly. The great composers were no less victorious as men than as musicians. The world has not frequently seen a human clarity as intense, a capacity for receiving, digesting and giving life as uncompromised, as that of John Sebastian Bach; or a loveliness as warm as Mozart's; or a majesty as simple as Beethoven's; or experienced a lifelong increase in wisdom and power as steady as Wagner's, with its culmination in the death-mask of a Buddha. And for two hundred years, a succession of great musicians had the power to receive and move a technique onward: Philip Emmanuel Bach receiving it from his great father; Haydn from P. S. Bach, and Beethoven from Haydn; Wagner from Beethoven; and the newest men from the old demiurge of Bayreuth.

And to-day a force related to theirs is at work in America. This is one of the most

significant aspects of the national situation. We have an American music: there existing a body of sonorous work, not jazz, made by persons associated with the American community, to be grouped without impertinence with classic European works. Jazz may continue to bulk large and remain the most striking product of our direction toward the instruments of music. Still, side by side with it, and side by side with other products of energy directed toward the means of art, there continue to appear with an accelerating speed, compositions rooted in the American "soil"; exploiting the material of sound in characteristic ways, and releasing a typical pathos. Possibly, the product is still small in worth. The creative talents are, assuredly, few and not mature. As a whole, the musical movement is still slighter and of less importance than either the pictorial or the literary, in proportion to its comparative recency. But it exists; it swells. New creative talents appear with every year; and

while they may yet seem uncertain and anything but overwhelming, they have added a new interest and excitement to life, filling it with the vibrance of gathering powers. How many revelatory experiences do we not owe to the work of Varèse, of Chavez, and Copland? How much of the intensity of American life does not come from the burgeoning of the talents of Harris and Sessions and Ruggles? It is of course too early to make prognostication of the final intensity and importance of the movement anything but idle amusement. Nonetheless, it is by no means too early to estimate the initial force. Considering the seriousness of the accomplishments, the fact that some of the most important living composers are Americans by nationality and by culture, such an estimation indeed becomes one of the tasks most incumbent on criticism. It has long been one of the most attractive adventures offered by present American life.

II

SPIRITUALS AND MOUNTAIN SONGS BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN MUSIC

EDWARD A. MACDOWELL

IN VIEW of the body of alleged American folksong, the contention that an American music is very young, must appear fantastic. It is in fact anything but absurd. The belief that the Negro spirituals and the songs of the Appalachian mountaineers constitute an authentic folk-music, like the English, the Russian and the Magyar, flatters our vanities. But there is little realism in it.

Of the charm of many of the spirituals and Kentucky mountain ballads, there is no question. They are to be cherished, whatever their origin. Still, by what right are we to claim them for our own? "Folk-songs," says the dictionary, "are marked by certain peculiarities of rhythm, form and melody, which are traceable, more or less clearly, to racial or national temperament, mode of life, climatic and

political conditions, geographical environment and language." Neither the spirituals nor the ballads fit this definition. The bare fact that both are found in use in the western hemisphere is certainly no argument for their originality. The peculiarities of each is traceable to extra-American conditions. As we know it, the Negro spiritual is an obviously sophisticated arrangement of some more primitive song. Its harmonizations are, unquestionably, the results of the contact of an inferior with a superior musical culture. We can merely guess at the basic tunes. Whatever they were, there is every reason to suppose them, too, arrangements rather more than native compositions. The characteristic syncopation, the short note on a strong beat followed immediately by a longer note on a weak beat, is found throughout the folk-music of the West African Negroes and the Hottentots. Again, the characteristic intervals of the fourth and fifth are significantly those of the Scotch folksong, are

even called the Scotch intervals. In view of these facts, we can scarcely hold them autochthonous. They are perhaps adaptations of the folksongs of other nations to American conditions, perhaps even superior to their originals. But, purely American they most certainly are not.

Evidences of derivation come even thicker in the music of the Appalachian mountaineers. To find people living hundreds of miles inland singing ballads on subjects born of sea-life and filled with allusions to details familiar to sailors, is in itself sufficient to make us pause for reflection. It was scarcely necessary for Cecil Sharp and the other musical anthropologists to collate the old Scotch and English originals of many of the ballads with their American variants, to convince us that the number of mountain songs actually born of the new situation and original to this country is relatively too small to count. No doubt, the mountaineers have produced a number of variations of the old originals; but they fre-

quently constitute deteriorations of the primal ideas, not improvements on them. The old-world folk tunes have a sad habit of deteriorating in the new world, a fact that must be familiar to all who, on a vocal summer's evening near the high-school steps, have recognized in *The Bear Went Over the Mountain*, the coarsened features of *Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre*.

A degree of originality must be allowed some of the early American hymn-tunes. But even these follow English models. No; American music, the body of music rooted in the American soil, begins with Edward MacDowell and is of our times. The circumstance is not at all mysterious. America was settled by people developed beyond the stage of civilization that is productive of folksongs. Americans have never lived a strictly communal life attached to the soil; and while such an attachment may appear in the near future, it will scarcely restore the form of primitive society. Straight-

ened as their circumstances in the New World were, the settlers could not and did not recapitulate stages of growth already behind them. The culture of Europe was their tradition, their past experience; forgotten and unconscious perhaps, but nonetheless active and inevitable. Growth of their own was necessarily an evolution of the tradition, the development in some direction of what was already experienced and accomplished. The fact that for a while no growth was apparent is no proof of reversion to earlier stages; the world knows seeds that after thirty centuries in Egyptian tombs, come up again as wheat. (It is noteworthy that primitive as the idiom and characteristic as the spirit of many of our most original composers, Copland, Harris, Chavez, Ruggles, are, their work implies as little of a denial of the European past as that of Stravinsky, Bartók, Milhaud, or any other radical European modern.)

But an American development along musical lines was obliged to wait on the

event of a trans-national America; at the very least, on the event of the latter nineteenth century with its improved communications and increased advantages. Musical culture, sympathetic familiarity with the instrumental technique and musical developments appropriate to their station in civilization, was at an extremely low point among the Anglo-Saxon settlers of the continent. England had a musical orientation up to the Revolution of 1688. After Tudor days, nonetheless it was pretty thoroughly confined to the upper circles; and the majority of the settlers, in the southern as well as the northern colonies, were drawn from the more Puritan, less musical classes. What culture they had was mainly ideological, literary and dry. Painting, for example, was practised among them merely for personal record; and while hymns and folksongs did come across the Atlantic in the many little Mayflowers, not many fanatics of Gibbon, of Purcell, or even of Handel, accompanied them. Had the

early colonists possessed an instrumental technique and musical culture, it is quite possible that American music might not have had to wait on the last decade of the nineteenth century, and that in the time in which creative energy first came to the community, a part of what went into literature might have gone into composition. Something which exists in tone would have made men want to compose. Symphonies based on old American hymn-tunes, like the recent one of Virgil Thomson, can easily be envisaged paralleling the poems of Emerson; and a development of the Anglo-Irish folksong like the melodies of Roy Harris might very conceivably have answered the Homeric yawp of the man of Manhattan. Is it entirely fantastic to believe that, had music-making been as widespread in the America of 1820 as in that of 1920, Poe would have turned to instrumental sonority rather than to words and verse for expression, and paralleled Chopin not in poetry but in music itself? Or that

Lanier would have become a sort of American Robert Franz? Certainly, both these poets sought to make words do something much more directly to the power of tone. Besides, the number of artists from Michelangelo and William Blake, to John Marin and Marsden Hartley, who have successfully treated more than one medium, sustains the assumption with the lesson that force, to a degree, remains independent of means; and very possibly may precede material determination.

As it was, abortive efforts to imitate Bellini and Donizetti were made in the forties. But it was only towards the middle of the nineteenth century, that Boston and New York grew familiar with the technique of instrumental music; and only during the last decades of the century, coincident with the heavy immigrations from Central Europe, that a musical life, at least a concert and opera-going habit, established itself in the great centers. Even then, the seeds of an original music were slow in sprouting. There are

various good reasons for this continued tardiness. For some unknown cause, music is invariably slow in developing; by no means only in America. It was the last of the arts to attain rebirth in Italy during the great Renaissance; Palestrina, Vittoria, and Monteverde working in the latter half of the sixteenth century, almost after the main burst of creative energy in the plastic arts was past. Indeed, the history of art is prolific in instances in which forces manifest themselves in poetry and painting an half century before they show themselves in music. The spiritual relationship of Wagner to the romantic idealists Tieck and Novalis is very close, but the music of *Tristan* was written almost fifty years later than Novalis' darkly voluptuous Hymns to the Night and Heinrich von *Öfterdingen*. Debussy's impressionism, blood brother of the symbolism of Verlaine and Mallarmé and the pointillism of Pissarro and Seurat, is distinctly the junior of the late-nineteenth century Parisian poetry

and painting. However, the chief obstruction to the early birth of an American music appears to have been not so much the native slowness of musical art, as the fact that the first familiarity with the technique and developments of musical art appropriate to the stage of evolution reached by American civilization fell upon bad times and insensitive ears. No time, we know, is entirely bad (i. e. impotent) for all men. The fantasy of *The Waste Land*, recently popularized by the poetry of T. S. Eliot, and the criticism of several young Americans, is not to be taken seriously. There may be Waste Lands. Many such cursed phases of existence doubtless do exist. But we know that a nation or a time bare of energy and thus prohibitive of the artist, such as the one implied by the generalization in the title of T. S. Eliot's poem, remains the phantom of some inexcusably limited feeling; and the perpetuation of a condition at the worst largely relative. Someone is always managing to work and to pro-

duce in every age. Someone is always finding his age propitious to his form of artistic activity; the world and someone's idea are always managing to harmonize. Even the weary soil on which European music fell in America, the period after the Civil War, saw the rise of Henry James, certainly as pure and disinterested an artist as ever lived, the flowering of Emily Dickinson, the appearance of the painter-poet Albert P. Ryder, and of the lesser but nonetheless unusually gifted Homer Martin, Winslow Homer, Mark Twain, and William James. Still, the period, like that following every great modern war, was an exhausted one. Weak in forces, it was not prolific of expressive individuals. Not that the American environment was "hostile," as certain recent critics would have us believe, thwarting and condemning to sterility great unknown geniuses, and reducing a potential Cervantes or Rabelais to the scale of Mark Twain, a potential Dostoievsky or Tolstoy to that of Henry James, and a potential

Dante to the size of a T. S. Eliot. What we call a favorable environment, and what we call creative ability, are actually but two aspects of a single force, basically or one with itself, and productive in its two-part play. Of these parts, one is the "not-I," the other the "I"; but essentially they are lovers; and in which one the divine spark arises is known to God alone. No, it was not the indifference of "society" to the artist that delayed the birth of an American music. It was the fact that after the Civil War there were few potencies in any field. There was little "doing" in the strata of being close to the collection, itself close to the supporting earth. Perhaps the "soil" was weary. Certainly, the race was so. The determined musicians, men like Paine and Lowell Mason, were forceless; weak personalities.

And, when at length music did sprout in the United States, it had neither the freshness and the power of the great mid-century prose and poetry, nor the inten-

sity of the new American painting. It was "winter on earth"; and the impulse was weak or convalescent. The music of Edward MacDowell, the first American to deserve the name of composer, amounts more to an assimilation of European motives, figures and ideas than to an original expression. In any case, the original elements are small and of minor importance. Trained in Germany under Raff, MacDowell continued for the first and longer part of his career, and as late as the Tragic and Heroic sonatas, a mere sectary of the grandiose German romantics. His conceptions followed theirs in falling into heroic, impassioned mold, and "Ercles' vein." His aim remained a massive homophonic music, diatonic in feeling, and harmonized with the rich close solemn chords characteristic of Chopin and Wagner, and developed not only by MacDowell himself, but by Franck, d'Indy, and Richard Strauss. The ideas of the main romantic composers, particularly Wagner, continued to haunt MacDow-

ell even in his later, more personal phase. We cannot avoid hearing a reminiscence of the pompous Meistersinger march in the slow movement of the Celtic sonata; and of the diminished minor chords commencing the last scene of *Götterdämmerung* in the Fireside Tale entitled *By Smouldering Embers*. The echoes are not only Wagnerian; the theme of the finale of the Celtic sonata has a strong resemblance to that of *The Hall of the Mountain King* in Grieg's *Peer Gynt* suite. And to the end, MacDowell shared his school's narrowness of artistic vision, embracing little outside the confines of homophonic music. He was badly equipped in polyphonic technique; and where, as in a passage of the last movement of the Norse sonata, he attempted canonic imitation, we find him essaying it clumsily, and with all the obsessive rapture of a child in possession of a new and dazzling toy.

Nor did MacDowell ever sustain a direct and untrammelled contact with his sonorous medium. The closest parallels

to his art are to be found in the works of Grieg and Rachmaninoff; like his, wanting the intensity that makes artistic work a new phenomenon; and contributing only slight and unimportant experiences. True, MacDowell had more talent for music and was always more natively lyrical and addressed to the instruments of his art, than any other member of his American group, Chadwick, Converse, Kelley, and the rest whose careers in several particulars coincided with his. But while his themes, musical sensations, and colorings finally grew less derivative, more original; and his style personal, readily distinguishable and of some intrinsic charm, he never attained real facility in moving his ideas, or in moving himself through them. Even where he is most individual, even in the very personal, characteristically dainty and tender little piano pieces, he frequently appears fixed and rigid in invention. The quaint little melodic idea in *Woodland Sketches*, the sort of sweetly harmonized secular hymn-

tune which he there calls *At an Old Trysting Place*, meets one at every turn; whether we wander in the *Guinevere* section of the *Sonata Eroica*, or in the *Old-Fashioned Garden* of the *New England Idylls*, we are never far from the little old rendezvous. Nor did he finally become abundantly able to do something of interest with his themes and go on adventures with them. The typical MacDowell piece wants rhythm and swing almost as much as jazz does. Even a number of the fairly individual smaller later pieces have a strange iterativeness, monotony, staticity in combination with frantic Wagnerian *steigerungen*, which in this case do not produce movement. The idea itself has not been extended. There is mere beat, as in jazz; and we are again and again left with the baffled feeling that the King of France has marched his men up the hill and straightway marched them down again. Of *Br'er Rabbit* is one of the few of the shorter

bits that moves of itself; and the little piece has not much weight or quality.

The case is not hard to point. We have in MacDowell's music the manifestation of a force directed toward the medium of music, and still not strong enough, at least not frequently strong enough to grasp the subject material robustly, and play in the stream of things. Talented and refined as he was, the composer remained always half the jazz-man, with his chronic aversion to reality, and wish to retire into his private paradise. This interior conflict and secret sentimentality, this tendency to accept the established and shrink from discovery and adventure, was not proper only to MacDowell. It seems to have run through the whole group of musicians of which he was the most eminent member. One is struck, in noting their careers, with the continual and fatal flirtation of the entire set with polite and academic circles, and with the currency of the desire to fit into powerful, established, authoritarian quarters.

Not that any of these men are to be accused of the spiritual servility to be found, say, in Paul Elmer More. All possessed some spontaneous, uncompromized delight in creation. Still, they were at cross purposes. It is impossible to doubt that Chadwick cared as much for his social position on the Charles as for the reality to which his art ostensibly was addressed. Little concerts of "American" works conducted by Walter Damrosch had a habit of getting themselves arranged for members of the American Academy. Even poor MacDowell, most independent and bohemian of the lot, finally gravitated to Columbia University, where to his sorrow he encountered the impenetrably hid rhinoceros whose park it is. Were it not for MacDowell's celtic descent, one might almost be tempted to attribute this group-wide weakness for the odors of sanctity to a racial strain, so many instances arising in which saxondom and snobbery (desire to stand in with the

powerful, and readiness to be persuaded of the value of whatever is highly thought of in high quarters) seem almost synonymous. MacDowell, however, was not Saxon, and the earlier explanation of the general timidity remains the more reasonable. In music, this weakness took the form of sentimentality. The feelings entertained about life by him seem to have remained uncertain; and while fumbling for them he seems regularly to have succumbed to "nice" and "respectable" emotions, conventional, accepted by and welcome to, the best people. It is shocking to find how full of vague poesy he is. Where his great romantic brethren, Brahms, Wagner, and Debussy, are direct and sensitive, clearly and tellingly expressive, MacDowell minces and simpers, maidenly, and ruffled. He is nothing if not a daughter of the American Revolution. He hymns "America" thinking of the Mayflower and its lovely load. His mind fondly dwells on old-fashioned New England gardens, old lavender, smoulder-

ing logs, sunsets, "a fairy sail with a fairy boat," little log cabins of dreams, the romance of German forests and the sexual sternness of Puritan days. This sentimentality is not only a matter of titles and mottoes. The music is drenched of it; and not alone the music of the little program-pieces, confessedly poetic in content and atmospheric in intention. The more abstractly treated sonatas are equally saturated, with their themes that triumph like absolute pure heroes in golden mail; their amorous sentiments wearing whitest gauze like Elsa in the first act; and their Tennysonian ardours and valours, raptures and sorrows perfectly "as advertised."

And still, MacDowell brought something into the world not hitherto present in it; not, at least, as music. Impure in style and weak in spirit though they are; indeed, of anything but the first water, a group of his compositions, particularly the ballade-like Norse sonata, certain of the more vigorous Sea Pieces, and the at-

mospheric Legend and Dirge of the Indian Suite for Orchestra, actually have musical value. What is musical in ourselves recognizes the genuineness and the relative vividness; and close inspection corroborates the impression. These pieces are really independent of the literary ideas associated with them. "Poetic" music though they are, they do not lean upon literature for their meanings, as do so many of the compositions of Chadwick, certainly more expert a technician than MacDowell. The passion of the former's *Aphrodite*, for example, resides chiefly in its title, which must be held in mind listening to the tone-poem. Failing, one might easily mistake the intention of the music, and suppose it an affectionate meditation on the fine old virtues of the composer's aunt. The spirits and recklessness of his *Tam O'Shanter* are equally a matter of convention: forget them, and the "cutty sarks" are gone, not to be coaxed to return for many an hour. Kelley's amiable New England Sym-

phony, too, essentially partakes of the literary: our pleasure in it being entirely dependent on our ability to keep certain pious representations of the Puritan fathers before us while it plays, and all consciousness of Rimsky and Tchaikowsky as far from us as possible. MacDowell's best pieces, however, stand on their own feet. The Norse sonata has a veritable *élan*. Romantically overpitched and denunciatory though it is, this work; and, for that matter, the good bits of the Sea Pieces and the Indian Suite, contain authentic exploitations of the medium of tone, uniquely expressive. There is a MacDowellesque accent, facileness and sentimentality notwithstanding; some glamour or tone added by him to the world's horizon. Perhaps it is merely a faint note of sweetness, a helpless sweetness, childlike and impotent in the world, and unbalanced by robust qualities other than voluptuousness. But in all Wagner and Grieg and Chopin there is nothing quite like it, with its queer romance.

What folly, the talk of a celtic atavism! Even the voluptuousness, the rich, heavy harmonization, has a justification from American life, with its hot suns and fertile soils, its luxury, bursting, sudden as a summer's day in March, on the crude urban civilization of the '80s and '90s. And parallels to MacDowell's queer tenderness abound in American literature. Hawthorne, Whitman, Howells, and other more recent prosemen and poets are full of it. For it has been given the American to be strong without brutality; and with a gentleness, which the riper, rounder, far more brightly polished European has not got. No, being music, MacDowell's best work could not but carry like blood in its veins, the spirit of the civilization in which it rose. One is of course at liberty to regret that representative pieces are not more richly and robustly significant, more characteristic, and abidingly interesting to those embarked on the adventure of life. Still, they are sensitive; they are a personal as-

simulation of European elements suffused with the cast of originality no genuine assimilation ever lacks. They constitute a beginning. And nature does nothing by bounds.

III

CHARLES MARTIN LOEFFLER: LEO
ORNSTEIN: DANE RUDHYAR

CHRONOLOGICALLY, Horatio Parker and not Charles Martin Loeffler succeeds MacDowell. But the order of American music is not strictly temporal. The place of Parker is farther on, closer to the center of the vortex. The place nearest MacDowell's is occupied by the relatively junior Loeffler, since of all the noteworthy compositions emergent in America, those corresponding most nearly in point of intensity with the Norse sonata and its brethren, are *A Pagan Poem* and its kin.

Externally, there is as wide a difference between the one group and the other as there is between the soft old velvet jacket of arch-bohemian days, and the most correct of morning-coats mounted with a carnation and surmounted with a tile. The music of the gentleman from Russia, Alsace, and Medford, Massachusetts, is

barbered, meticulous, even Brummell-like. The simplicities and languors of MacDowell appear very provincial, a little rustic even, beside its mauve and glittering urbanities, its evident wit, polish and sophistication. Basically, nonetheless, the difference between the two expressions is not very great.

Loeffler's music is frequently called cosmopolitan. Now, to be truly cosmopolitan, free from provinciality and pertaining to the world as a whole, is, as Stravinsky has said, "to have a passport," and a passport establishing the identity of the bearer is precisely what the songs and tone-poems, rhapsodies and choral-pieces of the worthy recluse of the Bostonian suburbs want most. The present writer once heard Loeffler's string-quartet described by a member of the audience which had just heard it, as a "musical trip around the world"; and the spry phrase has recurred to him listening to other of this composer's works; so motley is their jewelled style, so reminiscent of

many races and backgrounds, personalities and æsthetics. Loeffler is both broad and diatonic in the German, Straussian manner, and precious and pentatonic and nasal in the French and Debussian; *La Bonne Chanson* lying more to the east, and *A Pagan Poem* to the west, of the spiritual Rhine. The themes of *Music for Four Stringed Instruments* have a distinctly Russian cast. *Hora Mystica* suggests adherence to the Schola Cantorum's cult of Franck. Not that one reproaches the composer for being neither Teutonic nor Gallic and not fitting into some accepted national category. What one does miss is a strict autonomy. Loeffler's music doesn't even constitute a sort of artistic Alsace, uniting several romantic, impressionistic, oriental musical strains in an individual synthesis. You can search his work in vain for the decided idiom, the integrity, never perhaps broadly exhibited by a great master's music, but nonetheless never absent from it; suffusing it as blood the body. Even Beethoven's

Russian themes became Beethoven under his treatment, just as in our day Ravel's Spanish and jazz-American themes have for better or for worse, become Ravel under *his*. But there is little intrinsically Loeffler in the mosaic of curious coloured bits of his music. An intelligence is evident, somewhere offstage. From the wings comes the glitter of an ambiguous regard and the suaveness and ironism of urbanity. But the style itself? Something anonymously Wagnerian and Brahmsian crossed with pentatonic French acridity; given to block-chord successions like Debussy's, but never pure. Even the composers of the Schola group in Paris, d'Indy, Magnard and the rest of the Wagnerizing Frenchmen temperamentally akin to Loeffler, have more individuality of diction, fundamentally hybrid like his although their styles remain. Loeffler is perhaps more cultivated, less narrow a mind than Magnard was or d'Indy is. (In an age familiar with the lettered, cultivated composer, he is quite eminent for

the excellence of his literary taste: his choice of lyrics revealing a sensitiveness to poetic merit as sure as that of Brahms, for instance, was unsure.) Still, d'Indy is the better composer. If his music is often stiff, it is never unfelt. And after all, intensity is the organ of individuality.

It is a large intensity that is wanting Loeffler's musicianship: as it is wanting MacDowell's. The magnificence, the lapidary ornamentation, the strange tone-colour and jewelled arpeggios do not conceal the tightness and finickiness of the underlying conceptions. Little careful distillations made in lurking fear of a banality, an indiscretion and looseness that really inheres in them, (the waltz-like horn-theme in *A Pagan Poem* quite gives the game away) these conceptions, motives and moods and significations recall not so much a great reality as drugs and concoctions at the apothecary's; little curious crystals, and green and violet liquids, corked in flasks and ranged on shelves. Or, because of the composer's

predilection for the macabre and sinister, for the ironic isolation of popular and liturgical refrains—à la Villetta in *Le Vilanelle du Diable*, and the Lorraine marching-song in *Music for Four Stringed Instruments*—and because of the mystical hocus-pocus and veiled “blasphemies,” they are as likely to lead the imagination to the representations of medieval laboratories, with their little retorts, their dried lizards and bats suspended from the beams, their skulls and skeletons and other objects terrific to the simple. The fundamental tightness and preciousness is never so apparent as in Loeffler’s attempts to cope with the large and cordial; particularly in his curious setting of St. Francis’s *Canticle of Brother Sun* for soprano voice and orchestra. To the passionately affirmative, divinely tender strophes of the first modern poets, Loeffler has married a jewelled symphony of petty, literal musical ideas; incrustated with all the precious colours and timbres of the orchestra; and suggestive of a

nicely curled and perfumed "poor little man."

Of all Loeffler's carefully chased works, it is *A Pagan Poem*, with its admirable piano filagree, its acrid trumpet triads and precipitous rhythms, that leaves one least conscious of finicky tightness. This Virgilian rhapsody, the tenderer one on Verlaine's *La Bonne Chanson*; the sincerely feelingful Easter section of *Music for Four Stringed Instruments*, and perhaps one or two of the songs, are responsible for Loeffler's appearance in the order of American music. For, after all, Charles Martin Loeffler cannot be counted a European composer, close as his work lies to music made in the old world and expressive of it; and slight as is its development beyond what has been produced there. Not that it is American merely because of the composer's long domestication among us. We cannot, for example, call the music composed by Ernest Bloch since his American residency, our own. But we do find Loeffler's stand-

ing in a relation to the soil on which it has hatched different than that of either the suite or sonata or concerto grosso of the former Genevese. Boston, we feel, with its museum-culture overlying fear of life, gave Loeffler's preciousness its opportunity, providing the favorable environment for an over-careful, ironic and half-sinister art. While the music expresses perhaps nothing generally American, it remains exquisitely representative of the Bostonian condition. That gives it its place in the American ranks; what situates it immediately beyond MacDowell's being the fact that, small as its impulse is, Loeffler's music nonetheless possesses a magnificence of texture superior to his predecessor's. It far surpasses MacDowell's in its goldsmithlike workmanship.

American music, then, begins undecidedly, not strongly individual, with a sharp leaning toward eclecticism. And a good deal of it, including the work of very eminent musicians, has actually contin-

ued on that level of creation. Indeed, almost half of American music constitutes a minor variant of European music, mixing original motives and manipulations with others accepted because of the practice of the past as "beautiful" and "expressive"; never quite achieving purity of style; invariably showing signs of the limited impulsion and feeling for life that accompanies and perhaps causes eclecticism.

The work of Leo Ornstein is another example. Still nothing demonstrates the rapidity of the impetus toward a pure American music more vividly, than the fact that the step immediately in advance of Loeffler's careful music is occupied by the young Russian-American pianist's. Here indeed is an interval! For Ornstein's atonic melismas have the dynamism, the frank lyricism, the touch of the grand style, never quite caught by the music of the Medford man. Ornstein's pieces are the reverse of finicky; at times almost too extremely so. His

æsthetic is one of spontaneous, uncalculated, virginal response; of indifference to systems and habits; and shrewdest attention to the rhythmic processes, waves of chemical reaction and bodily resonances set up in him in contact with the world. He rose on the musical horizon about 1914 as part of the international "cubistic," "abstract" movement of craftsmen convinced that art embodies the meaning things have for the artist and remains a record of what they "do" to him; and he has remained of that faith, at least in the best of his more recent hours. And incomplete and undistinguished as some of his pieces are, turgid of substance and disagreeably exciting, they nonetheless have immediate infectiousness. To some degree, they make us feel the charge in which they were created. Doubt of the clarity and strength of those charges, may be inevitable. But there is always an impetus, natively directed towards its metallic medium.

Ornstein is one of the first American

composers with a strong musical background. As none before him in the country, he gives the sense that music is his native language, and that he inherited facility with it as naturally as he inherited facility with human speech. What remains uncertain is merely the intensity of the native direction. Ornstein too has his limits; is not as remote from musicians of Loeffler's sort as would at first appear. He burst upon the view as an extremely violent and dissonant young piano composer (something to be distinguished sharply from a merely atonic one such as Stravinsky or Schoenberg or Bartok), feeling himself a creative urge in an environment that seemed half to invite and half to threaten him. Possibly Ornstein found the harmonization of his earliest world, the past alive in him, and the raw, mechanical, flat America difficult merely because he was born in Russia and transplanted to New York's lower East Side in sensitive youth. In any case, the responses characteristic of Ornstein

during the years in which he first fascinated and outraged the musical world, referred to a painful, rude, and powerful reality, wildly energizing the composer. All was pressure of stone and metal tons, convulsive dances of hard masses, voluptuousness in the sinister shadows. The vehement Preludes, Moods, Poems, and Dances of Ornstein's first creative period, Debussian in the thickness and richness of their steely harmonies, but oriental and Yiddish in their wailing melodies, their abruptness and dismalness, were heavy with unrelieved tension; full of violent, almost animal cries of anger and pain and fear, threats, defiances, frenzies and occasionally, a well-nigh epileptic joy. Built of short stubby rhythmic phrases and precipitous sequences of chords of close-lying notes (later called tone-clusters by Henry Cowell), they rarely transcended the fragmentary, exhibiting a helplessness very inharmonious with their boldness and harsh disdain of the sweet and pretty.

All this was to be accepted as the sincere, discordant gestures of a young musician measuring himself against the alien reality of industrial America. But maturity has been slow in developing. Ornstein's intensity has not materially increased since those exciting hours of début. The æsthetic of spontaneous, uncalculated, virginal response has made way for one of greater dependence on other music. No doubt Ornstein's recent quartets and sonatas and quintets are better put together than the Poems of 1917, say. The composer has acquired a certain ingenuity in developing themes. The transitions between various ideas are fairly well managed; and each of the new works contains some sincerely passionate pages, and many instances of happy pianistic colour and technique. There is always some dynamism. Even the most plebeian and sugary of Ornstein's compositions "goes." But what was thrilling about his earlier pieces was their sensitivity, their approach toward a style expressive of the

age of steel, their "feeling of today"; and the new pieces are less fresh in quality than their predecessors, and are expressive of some state that, rich and poignant at moments, for all its richness and fluidity, isn't of the first liveness. While the themes and ideas are more shapely, less harsh and rigid than the earlier ones, they are also less distinguished from each other, and more conventional and second-hand. Ornstein's first motives were very evidently developments, half of the undulant, synagogic chants and plaints and half of the "Russian" style of Tchaikowsky; but these latter seem less like developments than continuations of those idioms, after the experience of Strawinsky and Scriabine. Ornstein's dolorous lyric passages in particular recall the *Symphonie Pathétique* and its deflated kin; without adding new experience. Other themes and rhythms suggest that *Le Sacre du Printemps* has passed this way; but do not build on Strawinsky as Strawinsky himself built on his master

Rimsky-Korsakoff. Still others have the sugary orientalism characteristic of both Russian and Russian-Jewish music. Now, all of these themes might be the subject of interesting and important developments, and occasion music of the first water. Many are intrinsically interesting. But what Ornstein does with them has some of the curious second-handedness of the idiom and thematic material itself. The manipulations are never significant; and in all the new quartets and sonatas and quintets we have the haunting sense of not being launched in fresh experiences at all. The contrasts of manic moods; the opposition of fierce sounds and themes, are somehow unsurprising. But while the ideas and forms are with a certain labour to be distinguished from each other, the feeling, the sorrow, anger, tragedy, what you will, of all of them, is scarcely to be distinguished at all. The conviction that these works are indeed modelled upon some semi-conscious emotional formula, some fixed point of view,

is unavoidable. We cannot believe that all Ornstein's brio is passion, or that his regularly, monotonously alternating motory wild dances and inconsolable lamentations, flow from immediate feeling of the world.

There is a revolutionary formula, after all, just as there is a polite one. An academy has been based on Dostoievsky, or rather on a misconception of Dostoievsky; quite as dogmatic, notwithstanding the fact that its æsthetic is one of energy and not of elegance, as any ever based upon Raphael or Scaliger. We feel its influence throughout Andreyev, with his stubborn preconception that everything must be violent, terrible, strong, and utterly black. It is present no less in the style of Waldo Frank, full of "energizings" and violent and clangorous words that have been preferred merely for their "strength" and without regard for their fitness. Max Weber would seem to be the revolutionary academician among painters, since so many of his shapes and lines

have but one burden, one ejaculation; and that, an unequivocal Oi Yoi Yoi. Ornstein is not as naïve as Frank or Weber. And yet, can we acquit him, either, of a charge of attempting to wear the pants of his grandfather, Dostoievsky; and of making everything properly strong, lurid, tragic, black, overwhelming, and very unconsolably dismal, in the approved revolutionary-academic fashion?

Occasionally, a virtuosic sense of the medium accompanies eclecticism; and Ornstein is one of those musicians like Rubinstein and Richard Strauss, who in spite of a dependence on the past, have a natural love of sumptuous sound and a brilliant facility in producing it. Ornstein writes magnificently for the piano. The treatment of the strings in his chamber-music may be thick and resourceless: in the piano-quintet they play almost continually as a body against the solo instrument. But his piano style is the fruit of a sense of the steely nature of the in-

strument as happy and full, one is tempted to affirm, as any that has existed. Ornstein's characteristic sonority is half metallic and half warm and soft, with the consistency of steel and the iridescence of silky fabrics. Certain chord-sequences call to mind juicy metal fruits torn apart like ripe peaches. Much of this richness is due to Ornstein's extraordinary harmonic sense, permitting him to hear dense, subtly differentiated complexes of tone; and to keep a mass of sound, as thick as any that has ever been given to the pianoforte, steadily running. In this, the piano of Ornstein is the equal of the orchestra of Strauss. Like Strauss, Ornstein's detail is anything but the finest, always lacking in the first distinction. Still, like Strauss's, his powers from time to time focus on some one problem, some one expression, and produce his equivalent of a *Don Quixote* or a *Sinfonia Domestica*. Works such as the *Double Sonata for Pianoforte* (later transformed into a *Concerto for Solo*

Piano and Orchestra), the slow movement of the piano quintet, and the opening movement of the new string quartet, develop a momentary largeness of expression, a heroism and a plangency, quite beyond the personal and full of world-feeling. Certainly, nothing more virtuosic than these pages was produced in the America which preceded them. Very little that has followed them, however much finer in quality and purer in style, has released sheer gorgeousness of sound more lavishly.

Meanwhile, there is a parallel to Ornstein's music; the work of another composer about equal to his in point of independence of the European past, and point of pianistic style. This is the music of Dane Rudhyar, an American of some dozen years' standing, but to be counted among the workers in this country. The relation of Rudhyar to Scriabine is somewhat the same as that of Ornstein to Tchaikowsky and Strawinsky. Scriabine is Rudhyar's father in

music. The younger man's first pieces: *Ravishments*, (1918), *Dithyrambs*, (1919), *Surge of Fire*, (1920) are Scriabinesque not only in their titles. They stem directly from the later sonatas and poems of the mystic Muscovite. And while the recent Rudhyar has developed a machine-like power quite beyond the earlier one, and quite overflowed the harmonic, rhythmic and emotional limits of Scriabine's art, the filiation is still evident. Rudhyar inherits the coolly aristocratic idiom, built on Scriabine's "natural" scale of overtones; finds the climate of music at the pitch of ecstasy; and recovers the Russian's erotically surging form. He continues not only Scriabine's sensitive, exquisite, trilling idiom, ritualistic elevation and flighted beat. The mantle of the mystic is upon him, too, through fascination with the Absolute, "that which was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be" and a tendency to identify himself with it. A number of Rudhyar's piano compositions indubitably

contain records of mystical unions with the basal forces of the universe. In instances, the fleeting, ecstatic and somewhat painful experiences take the form of feeling of barbaric power. In others, they come as gropings in the darkness, stirrings of blind hunger passive and submissive. Sometimes the quiet tides of the abyss move stilly: the waters before the spirit brooded over them. Sometimes, fires stream upward in joyous vehemence, changing worlds in their fierce ascent. Occasionally, in a certain number of Rudhyar's piano pieces (for like Ornstein he is determinedly the man of the great individualistic medium) the contact is vague, the spark is faint; and then he irritates one with the hysteric aspirations and sick indeterminate intensifications characteristic of much unsuccessful "cosmic" poetry. Still, a good number of his pieces are sufficiently filled with wild power, sufficiently stirring, to constitute a kind of mystical art legitimated in the age of steel.

And like Ornstein's, Rudhyar's music must be classed not as an independent phenomenon, but as a variant of the European music that preceded it. In certain respects, Rudhyar is distinctly inferior to his master Scriabine. There is a motory weakness in his music, many of his compositions moving far more sluggishly than the Russian's frequently languid but never nerveless music. This defect has become more pronounced as Rudhyar has developed; indeed, his recent Paeans are dangerously arhythmical. The marvelously sonorous phrases of which these three pieces are built do not, as the composer would have them, germinate and sprout "into vast trees of harmony." The basic impulse, which ought to carry them like cars on a trolley, seems lethargic. In any case, Rudhyar has always had a tendency to feel life too much as "moment," and not sufficiently as a chain and sequence of events. This of course is part of his innate romanticism, since the accent of romanticism falls on the single

perfect moment, which it wishes to eternalize. Proud, solitary, introverted, the typical romanticist sees the world less in sequences and oppositions, in linear and contrapuntal forms, than in a sort of simultaneity; whence his greater interest in chords, his lesser in the classically related chain. But Rudhyar's solipsism has always been a little unbalanced; and instead of acquiring some equipoise, he seems recently to have retired even more deeply into himself, till the rest of creation appears only the idea of his own mind and his own psyche one with the basic forces of the universe. At least, the strong staticity of his new music would seem to indicate as much.

But in other respects Rudhyar builds upon his master's edifice, even surpassing it in the attractiveness of its kind of resonance. Rudhyar's sonorities are harder and more intricate than Scriabine's. Predominantly a homophonic composer, Rudhyar builds up full and prodigiously extended chords, strangely without thick-

ness, and simultaneously steely and rich. Not even Schoenberg piles up subtler, more intricate complexes; and Rudhyar's in their clangorousness are like jewels of the machine era. These complexes are often left reverberating or slowly merged with others, the young hierophant considering the piano "a dynamic instrument belonging to the class of gongs or bells, and destined to produce masses of resonance, homogenized by the pedal"; and very deliberately treating it as an instrument of percussion. Frequently, he calls a machine-like thunder out of the piano, a clamour and clangour of metal surpassing anything in Scriabine's predominantly voluptuous scores. Staccato and martellato notes abound; producing the characteristic gong-like and metallic sounds. *Zodiacal Birth*, one of the series of *Moments*, demands piano-roars to be gotten only by striking chords of black keys with the entire forearm, after the manner of Rudhyar's Californian neighbor, Henry Cowell. On the whole, Rudhyar

varies these percussive sounds with considerable acumen and poetry. The Moments are full of strong, nervous and perfectly legitimate contrasts and changes of mood, sonority and beat; sudden necessary accelerations and agitations, and equally sudden retardations and *calmats*. Thunderous effects are obtained through single unsupported voices: No. 2 of the first cycle of Moments has fine examples of such effects. Rudhyar is also to be credited with a delicate, passionate melodic line twisting in arabesque-like mordants.

To be sure, we may not too unhesitatingly identify Dane Rudhyar and his music with American life. The composer was bred in France and is an American of fairly recent standing. Still, his work has little parity with that of his Parisian coevals, influenced by the epochal change of sensibility and unsteadied by the general disappointment. The young French music is marred by an abuse of the grotesque, an attempted substitution of sur-

face feelings for feeling, the introduction of the facts of personality and transient emotions; and by a formalism based on a misconception of Bach and Mozart. But from the beginning of his career, Rudhyar's music was lyrical and provocative of direct feeling. Strikingly Scriabinesque and tintured with literature though they were, those first Ravishments and Luciferian Stanzas and Dithyrambs of his lay in the medium for which they were cast, and sustained themselves on the high level on which their composer pitched them. And only excessive prudence could prevent us from accepting, in part at least, as products of our own soil, the music Rudhyar has produced on it. The machine-like power in them: might it not well represent the response of a sensitive human nature to aspects of this fuming land? Their fusion of richness and austerity: has it nothing to do with the spirit of America? It has for the present writer; and it is not so much beside Ozymandias in the Egyptian sand that the grandiose

clangours and stony weight of such a piece as Rudhyar's *King of Kings* places him, as beside the mountainous American architecture of recent years. The very rigid grandiosity of this and its companion pieces has American analogies. The Plains awoke something of the sort in the Indians themselves, expressed in the cosmic, elemental names they gave their children; and poets of the cast of Carl Sandburg are unconsciously moved by similar vague influences. And might not Rudhyar's very mysticism spring from the life of Pacific seaboard, where his tent is pitched, and where men look still further to the west, and feel Brahma near?

IV

ROGER SESSIONS: ADOLPH WEISS: VIRGIL THOMSON: CARL RUGGLES: AND OTHERS

ROGER SESSIONS follows Rudhyar; and allays an uncertainty inevitable in view of the fact that Loeffler, Ornstein, and Rudhyar are all three deracinated men, transplanted from the old world to the new. This, is the doubt whether the eclecticism of much American music may not flow from the early and therefore strong European associations of many of its authors? Rudhyar was a youth, Loeffler a full-grown man when they arrived in the States. While Ornstein was only nine in the year of his hegira, he was a small boy bristling with experience not merely of the Russian Pale, but of the St. Petersburg conservatory sphere as well. Where then is the illogicality, one hears oneself arguing, if these individuals are divided and their music hybrid? What indeed would be more *natural* than that their work should constitute a variation

of contemporary European music rather more than an independent and American thing? During formative years they were in contact with the old world soil; and might it not be possible to declare that integrity of impulse and purity of style are inextricably connected in America with American birth, perhaps with descent from long acclimatized stocks; in any case with adolescence in an environment superficially, linguistically, germane to the growing artist?

This argument falls flat before the phenomenon of Roger Sessions. Sessions comes of the oldest Puritan New England stock; and still neither Loeffler nor Ornstein nor Rudhyar is essentially more eclectic in his ideas and forms than he. (Later, Copland, Chavez, and Varèse will supply other disproofs of the contention of those tempted to identify integrity with hundred percentism, or pretend that America is not the native soil of anyone who *feels* it to be his.) Meanwhile, it is important to observe how

frankly Roger Sessions has done his recent severely simple, perhaps most valuable work in the shadow of the later Strawinsky. Indeed Loeffler is not a bit more the sectary of the Wagnerizing Frenchmen, or Ornstein the sectary of the earlier Strawinsky, or Rudhyar of Scriabine, than Sessions of the composer of the Symphonies for Wind Instruments, the Octuor, and *Œdipus Rex*. Not that this young old New Englander has duplicated Strawinsky, or made literature of him. In these respects he is sharply to be distinguished from several other young men, among them one George Antheil, a great composer in Parisian literary circles. Antheil's well-advertised Ballet *Mechanique* is a skyscraper built of girders synthesized from *Les Noces*, *Le Sacre* and *Petrushka*, and dependent for support on associated ideas. At best it is a clumsy musical illustration; a simile for factories, downtown New York streets, the beat of American life or the experience of *subvia dolorosa*; devoid of

the freshness of impulse or the structurality that gives such humble musical illustrations as the tone-poems of Smetana their charm. And though a certain musicianliness is evident at many turns of his work, the creative force of the signor Antheil remains as yet too embryonic to be clearly discerned. No, Sessions has not had to call on flashy literary associations to give his helpless efforts significance and cohesion. His symphony, for example, is an independent, self-definite structure, working as music and not as a little auxiliary power-house or subway-train. Indeed, there is reason for holding the second movement of this composition superior to any of the instrumental pieces of Strawinsky that so largely helped determine its form and manner. There is more warmth and necessity in it than in the Octuor or the Concerto or any other of the experiments of the archaizing Russian. Only, we cannot help feeling that while Sessions at present figures conspicuously in the field of music, he never-

theless does so as a winsome young pachyderm shambling in the lee of its parent.

The influence of Strawinsky on Sessions is two-fold. One part of it bears on general æsthetics, and is anti-religious in tendency. All attempts to continue in the exalted and ecstatic style begun by Beethoven, developed by Wagner and perhaps abused by Strauss, Mahler, Scriabine, and the twentieth century romanticists, are condemned by it as bad, at least as unrealistic. To such elevated, excited expressions it instinctively prefers the humbler, dryer and more disabused manner of much eighteenth century music. There has always been a strongly eighteenth century cast on the music of Strawinsky, ever since "Petrushka": something of clarity, pertness and levity; but the ascendancy which the anti-religious, hard boiled æsthetic has recently and most sensationally gained over him is to be attributed to the strongly collective trend of present society under the leadership of the U. S. S. R. and the U. S. A.

The hard-boiled æsthetic is essentially an expression of collectivism. Feelings of humility, anonymity and helplessness bring man out of his conceit and into sympathy with and understanding of his fellows; hence collectivism's abhorrence of all grandiosity, exaltation and sumptuousness of style. Like all radical tendencies, this æsthetic of Strawinsky's had been gathering momentum long before its assumption of power in our day. Its father, at least its parent as far as the present is concerned, is Moussorgsky, himself roughly contemporary with Wagner. The style of Boris Goudonow is as humble and popular as that of Tristan is exalted and emphatic; and characteristically gives the conspicuous rôle not to beplumed and clanking heroes and heroines, but to the great anonymous chorus. Already in the eighteen-nineties, coincident with the rise of Richard Strauss and the titanism of *Ein Heldenleben*, this abhorrence of the heroic and unreserved, and preference of the unemphatic and

unpretentious, was exerting its influence on Debussy in Paris. A stage of its progress indubitably is to be found in the simplicity and relative taciturnity of *Pelleas et Melisande*, mixed though it is with ultra-romantic jewelry, dreaminess, and feeling of rarity and aloofness.

Then it triumphed in Strawinsky, in all his uncertainty one of the most uncompromisingly determined musicians of our time. (While the effect of Satie must be allowed, it cannot be aligned with that of Strawinsky, for the reason that while Satie was a very charming musician, he had neither the Russian's freshness or strength.) Beginning as the most promising pupil of Rimsky-Korsakoff—Strawinsky is spiritually the descendant of Moussorgsky's group—and as a composer of somewhat religious leanings, Strawinsky steadily evolved in the hard-boiled direction. *Petrushka* is significantly popular and humble in style; *Le Sacre du Printemps* expresses the strata of man where he is still the unindividuated herd-being;

and in the uncompromisingly polytonic Renard, *Les Noces* and *L'histoire du soldat*, the disabused, dry æsthetic dominates. In the more recent concerto, sonata, octuour, serenade, and the cantata *Œdipus Rex*, an archaicizing tendency, often the companion of an anti-religious one, puts in its appearance.

It is precisely these later works of Stravinsky that have so profoundly impressed Roger Sessions. Sessions's symphony, to date his largest, most affecting and engaging work, is eminently "music for every day" in the spirit of Renard and *L'histoire du soldat*; and as such distinguished from all preceding pieces of American music, predominantly exalted and grandiose in their conceptions. One doesn't feel the temple-dome over it. It seems to live in the atmosphere of weekdays, serious, sober, but never ritualistic. There are no hot clashing colours, no heavy emphasis, no Wagnerian intensifications and ardours and exaltations in this symphony. The material is stark and the

outline strong. Sessions's polytonality and polyphony are uncompromising, and sometimes harsh; his whole manner is abrupt and somewhat uncouth.

Certainly, the bare fact that Sessions has written a piece of music eminently dry in spirit does not mark him as a follower of Strawinsky. *Æsthetics* are everybody's; and hard boiledism is probably the most appropriate to American life. What does couple Sessions with Strawinsky, is the fact that his little symphony pays homage not only to Strawinsky the prophet but to Strawinsky the technician. We have called the Russian's influence on Strawinsky two-fold; and if one part bears on general *æsthetic* matters, the other bears on methods of composition. Several of Sessions's typical processes resemble tactics personal to Strawinsky. Now, a tendency to eschew chromaticism and orientalism in melody; and a practice of letting counterpoint bear the brunt of composition, are not in themselves sufficiently exclusive to Straw-

insky, characteristic of him though they are, to warrant our calling all other composers exhibiting them partisans of his. But when they appear in company with the very Strawinskian strategy of using unit groups of eighth notes irregularly divided, we cannot help feeling that the musician combining them has more than gone to school to the classicizing Russ. Besides, eclecticism is an attitude familiar in Sessions. He began under the wing of his master Ernest Bloch. The work which won him his first renown, the incidental music to Andreyev's *Black Maskers*, was full of the warm passion, vehemence, and sardonic grimaces characteristic of the composer of *Schelomo*. This homage was not at all remarkable since nearly all composers begin as scholars of some older man: Bach as Buxtehude's, Beethoven as Mozart's and Haydn's, Wagner as Weber's and Meyerbeer's. What nonetheless *was* singular, was the circumstance that when Sessions broke away from the dominance of Bloch, and should, by rule, have gone

his own and solitary way, he merely exchanged one influence for another, substituting the overlordship of Strawinsky for that of the vehement late-romanticist. His eclecticism embraces not only contemporary musical forms. If the symphony shows the presence of Strawinsky, the Three Choral Preludes for Organ and the piano-sonata have a decided archaistic cast: the former pointing back to Bach and verging on the scholastic; the first and third movements of the latter bearing a disquieting resemblance to the nocturne-style of Chopin. And while a pervasive passion might conceivably make one overlook the eclecticism of these pieces, none is present to any satisfactory measure.

Still, if Sessions is an eclectic composer, he is also an admirable one. All his pieces have some personal imprint. Even where he is closest to Strawinsky, he has more robustness than ever comes the way of the somewhat chlorotic Russian. There is a certain "sitting on the notes" that is very

characteristic of everything Sessions writes. The Black Maskers had a grim mournfulness and morbidity characteristic of a race, recalling the fact that the most celebrated scene of British drama is that of Hamlet with the skull of Yorick, and that the favourite poem of eighteenth-century England was the Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard. Besides, Sessions is a very able musician. The twenty-eight or nine instruments for which the Andreyev music was cast were handled with a skill remarkable in an American; and all the Three Choral Preludes, the sonata, and symphony have an elegant structurality, an honest bareness and logic, that command respect, however unintegrated the pervading spirit may appear. As for Sessions's symphony, it is not only the sturdiest, most forceful and intricate of his compositions, it is rounder, more inevitable and texturally continuous than any other symphony written by an American, the brilliant one by Aaron Copland not

excepted. While the second movement, with its antiphonal string choirs is perhaps the most spontaneously fluid of all three, as a whole the work represents an integrity certainly as great as Ornstein's and perhaps even greater (the line is cleaner). And in giving Sessions his place in the advance of American music, it suggests the course a development of his powers might take. Sufficiently fortunate, it could scarcely fail of producing an American Brahms. To be sure, the distance between a merely eclectic composer, no matter how sturdy a one, and one who, like Brahms, (while scarcely enlarging the medium, and developing no new methods), nonetheless strikes traditional material with his own effigy, is indeed a large one. But it is not unnegotiable; and the "sitting on the notes" of Sessions is suggestive enough of Brahmsian robustness to make the possibility of the progress seem not at all remote.

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Meanwhile, the compositions of a number of other young musicians corroborate the testimony of Sessions concerning the relation between eclecticism and immigrant psychology. Noteworthy among them are the strong quarters, piano preludes and chamber symphony of Adolph Weiss, himself a native of Baltimore. The dependence of these works on Schoenberg is even more pronounced than the dependence of the Sessions symphony on Strawinsky. Not that the resemblance of Weiss's music to the great Viennese sciolist's is slavish, any more than that of the New Englander to *his* prototype's. Compressed, abrupt, excitingly pitched as they are, Schoenbergian in their nervousness, their piercing emotionalism and trembling eroticism, they still exhibit a vein of individuality which, while perhaps smaller than Sessions's, is nonetheless definite. Weiss's music has a stronger relation to diatonism than to the atonality so characteristic of Schoenberg's; and his expression is more simply lyrical, more

innocently human, than Schoenberg's fiercer, tortured one. While Weiss is Schoenberg's pupil, it is said that "the master," questions his own right to claim this talented American as a disciple, granting him an independence of method not frequently found or easily tolerated in his group. Besides, no piece of Weiss's fails to strike some expression from the depths, and bring exquisite flashes of music, jewel-like crystallizations in tone. But while recognizing his integrity, we must find Schoenberg's verdict the utterance of an unusually jealous god; one who will not only not permit his children to have another god before him, but disowns, when he finds he cannot own them. To us, Weiss seems a most gentle but nevertheless most passionate adherent of Viennese method. Schoenberg's school is fanatically devoted to certain contrapuntal norms, certain kinds of canonic imitation, especially crab-form inversions of the sort used by Beethoven in the Hammerklavier sonata; and Weiss's

music at times seems fuller of crabs than Chesapeake Bay. Not that this contrapuntal craft of Weiss's is not admirable in itself. He has a very eminent skill in conserving his material through the art of thematic variation; and some of his fugues are marvels of compression and interfusions of theme and divertissement. If we gird at his tricks, it is because their frequency in his work make them seem not so much responses to the pressure of life seeking its form, as acts of faith in the Schoenbergian revelation. Besides, Weiss's chromatic material is not strictly autonomous, and has a strong family likeness to that of Berg, Webern and the rest of the Viennese coterie.

We must of course be a little wary in insisting too strongly on an eclecticism in speaking of Weiss. The relationship between his music and Schoenberg's is to some extent accidental, the result of a common background and spiritual kinship. Weiss is a Baltimorian, and the city of H. L. Mencken remains something of

an outpost of the Vaterland. Besides, Weiss like Schoenberg, belongs temperamentally on the religious side of things, finding the climate of music at the pitch of ecstasy, and preferring the more reverend, more earnest and elevated moods to the lighter and more ironical. Hence, it was almost inevitable that Weiss like Schoenberg should develop the tremendously excited vein of music associated with Wagner and present in their blood; and that we should find certain of Weiss's preludes, the extension of certain Tristanesque moods. (No. 4, in spite of its relative innocence and jocundity, seems like a new expression of the agitation felt by the wounded hero at the approach of his queen.) Nevertheless and in face of this blood-kinship, the relationship ineluctably appears more a dependency than a parallelism. Together with the sectarianism in form and treatment, Weiss's music displays the tenuity of feeling, the inclination from the American soil, invariably

accompanying an eclectic style. And that, finally, decides the vexed question.

Then there is the American following of Satie, most conspicuously represented by Virgil Thomson. Now, his fascination with the musical expressions of the urban populations, and his cultivation of the light and *café chantant* note, do not in themselves affirm Thomson a disciple of Satie's; characteristic of the good master of Arcueil as were distaste for the "respiration of Bayreuth," and a preference for an easy vulgar art, full of the graces of the music-halls, and as readily sung as popular ballads are. After all, the distrust of the classic forms, and the desire to refresh musical art in the demotic bath, are both post-war phenomena. The music of the young Kansas City composer assuredly has an individual cast. But it is neither strong nor unclouded; and the relation to the *café* atmosphere of Paris is evident in themes and treatment. The flippancy so specially Satie's and his progeny's, the Parisian Six, plays a large rôle

in Thomson's art. His Valse Grégorienne and his half absurd, half grandiose settings of the lyrical but nevertheless preposterous verses of the Duchesse de Rohan, charming as they remain, are bits of Gallic clowning. (It is significant that most of Thomson's songs set French and not English verses.) The one American poet he has distinguished is Gertrude Stein; but his musical arrangement of her opera on St. Theresa and St. Ignatius, and her cantata Capital Capitals, are ultimately *jeux d'esprit*. To be sure, both works are musically effective; and the fourth act of the opera, with its processional and its chorus Dead as Dead, has a real worth. The vocal patter-writing is noteworthy; the words being chanted very rapidly to an original kind of monody. Indeed, Capital Capitals resembles a Gregorian mass; one, of course, written by a spoiled priest. Still, the music in these works is to be found chiefly in Gertrude Stein's wonderfully melodious prose; Thomson having contented

himself, particularly in the opera, with the purveyance of a mere accompaniment of willfully banal chords and arpeggios, and simple figures comically emphasized. Both works resemble inverted Italian operas: since instead of words as a pretext for music, they give us music as a pretext for words.

Thomson began by writing some tangos in the style of Satie's best disciple, Milhaud (Thomson's were much better than Milhaud's, too). And one of the most respectable of his pieces, the *Sonata di Chiesa* for clarinet, trumpet, viola, horn, and trombone, is still suggestive of Satie's influence. Thomson not only places a tango between the chorale and a fugue; but strives for and attains the simplicity of line and purity of expression of Satie's serious works. Some more recent compositions, the *Symphony on an American Hymn Tune*, and the four variations and fugues for organ on "Come, ye disconsolate," "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus," "Will there be any stars in my

crown?" and "Shall we gather at the river?" are more radical and original. All of them have a primitive naïveté; and the symphony attains the quaintness of a Currier and Ives print. The style is angular and archaic with a distinct quality, a mixture of the severe, homely and delicate. Indeed, the symphony is pervaded by a mysterious feel of the American soil and past; and with the organ pieces suggests that in Thomson, too, the eclectic may eventually make way for the earth-born.

Space permitting, additional evidences of the prevalence of eclecticism among native born American composers might be gleaned from the music of Ruth Crawford of the Rudhyar-Scriabine faction, Quincy Porter of the Bloch party, Louis Gruenberg the pupil of Busoni, Frederick Jacobi the pupil of Dukas, Avery Claflin but late of the Satie school; and from the works of such older friends as Arthur Foote, the late Charles Griffes, Emerson Whithorne and Harold Morris, and such

younger comers as Douglas Moore, Colin McPhee and Theodore Chanler. And it is a pity that the prescribed limits of this essay do not permit some further examination of the work of these musicians; some consideration of the merits of the Arthur Foote Quintet, the Griffes Piano Sonata, the Morris Trio or the Chanler Violin Sonata; some discussion of such engaging questions as whether Douglas Moore is not the most competent and tasteful composer of incidental music among the Americans; whether Ruth Crawford is not the most distinguished woman-composer in the younger ranks; and whether anything that Avery Claflin has done as a pupil of Satie's and a brother of the Group of Six, is worth his setting, for woman's a-capella chorus, of the Cummings poem, written by him as a Puritan and a devotee. But they do not; and we must content ourselves with remarking the prevalence of the eclectic tendency among these and even other unmentioned musicians; and go on to a con-

sideration of the work of Carl Ruggles. And this consolation is possible: that no matter how much space would be at our disposal, it would still be with a word on Ruggles's compositions that the discussion of the unavoidable subject of American eclecticism would come to an end. For Ruggles's music is a border-line phenomenon; and as such the link between the works we have just been examining and those which, both integral and intense, stand on the free ground beyond.

In fact, it is difficult to say which camp his music favours more. Ruggles's harmonic schemes are of the greatest distinction. This quality, neither rich nor magnificent, and nonetheless exquisitely refined, and new to harmonic writing, ineluctably associates itself with early American furniture and Hartley's colour, Portsmouth doorways and Hawthorne's prose. His instrumental timbre is equally this Cape Cod American's own, particularly when confined to instruments of a single family; trumpets in the middle sec-

tion of Men and Angels; strings in Portals, and in the middle section of Men and Mountains. The feeling of all Ruggles's more recent, rounder compositions is intensely local. The melancholy and smothered passion of the eloquently weaving violin-music in Lilacs, middle section of Men and Mountains, is as characteristic of the New England country-side as anything by Robinson or Frost. So, too, is the harshness of certain of Ruggles's brazen sonorities; and in instances his acrid trumpets and trombones preach and dogmatize ministerially at imaginary congregations.

At the same time, there is a noticeable tenuity and inarticulacy in his frequently ejaculative, but always sincere creations. The music labours, slightly. The line at best is only competent, built as it is of short repeated phrases effortfully varied and intensified. The check of preconceptions is equally obtrusive: Ruggles like Schoenberg has a tendency to construct his works on formulas. He will tell you

that he never doubles a note in his harmony, nor repeats a note nor its octave in the melody nor in the inner parts, until the passage of from seven to nine different notes has taken place. Now, while it is not to be doubted that certain extraordinary pages of music exhibit this heterogeneity of elements, mere heterogeneity of elements does not constitute music; and the attempt to force it on material involves a violation as destructive as any flowing from other preconceptions. The strained quality sometimes apparent in Ruggles's scores, and the unusual slowness with which he produces, are quite attributable to it.

It is this feeling of a slightly impeded impulse, that, together with the vaguely Tristanesque or Schoenbergian cast which Ruggles's music frequently wears, makes it straddle the line dividing the more eclectic American music from the more original. This position on the fence is signified by the ease, never the best of conditions with which one places Ruggles in

the ultra-religious camp of musicians. Ruggles is all elevation, seriousness, apocalypse. Music for him is an expression of the depths, an explosion, a scattering of the seeds of revelation. To "Men and Mountains" he prefixes a quotation from Blake, "Great things are done when men and mountains meet"; and over the symphonic ensemble, *Portals*, there stand Whitman's lines:

"What are they of the known

But to ascend and enter the Unknown?"
Hear Lawrence Gilman: "Mr Ruggles . . . is a natural mystic, a rhapsodist, a composer who sees visions and dreams fantastic dreams. The wild, gigantic, tortured symbols of Blake's imagination, his riotous and untrammelled excursions in the world behind the heavens, are all of a piece with Mr. Ruggles's thinking. There is a touch of the apocalyptic, the fabulous, about his fantasies. He is the first unicorn to enter American music. He is the master of a strange, torrential and perturbing discourse." . . . But here,

again, we must be wary. While Ruggles is to be placed in an already well-defined category, it must be confessed that he manages to move about in it restlessly enough. This idiom, alternately naïve and childlike, and violent and prophetic, is never either derivative or imitative. Warm and vibrant, embodying the characteristic "romantic" surge and aspiration, it remains robust and reserved. The aching violin music of *Portals* may come thrust out by a Tristanesque storm of feeling, and rise in steep tumultuous waves; and proceed with great warmth of accent and vibrancy of sound. The polyphony may have a tapestry-like richness, the harmonies a singularity and mysteriousness, the thrilling sequence of single notes left to vibrate and die away in the coda possess mystic seductiveness. Nevertheless, muscularity, and freedom from languor place Ruggles's work apart from its kin; and we feel that with but one more degree of purity, this music would indeed be indisputably individual; and

that if there are any American compositions actually more autochthonous than that of this Cape Cod Yankee, a force from the soil like a charge, must have sent them into the world.

V

HORATIO PARKER: DEEMS TAYLOR:

ROY HARRIS

SUCH charges have actually occurred. There is an American music, or music by Americans, quite autonomous in material, integral in form and expression, walking the world in its own good right. Numerically, the works born of the smaller forces, those insufficiently powerful to make of their exercise a satisfaction requiring no support and sanction, still predominate. Perhaps they will always do so. But something has moved, grown stronger, in recent America. For the first time, we in the west have a music, a treatment of sonorous material and an expression; immediately declarative, like our other growing arts, of impulses requiring no self-justification through conformity with prevalent æsthetics; and making independently for style.

The earliest; in certain respects the

least advanced, of these, are Horatio Parker's oratorio *Hora Novissima* and opera *Mona*. Neither of these virile compositions lean either on literature or on the æsthetics of other times and composers. Whatever limits the breadth and richness the material may have, the material itself is independent and sturdy; and the method of treatment, appropriate to it. This does not mean that Horatio Parker was either an exuberantly gifted or universally comprehensive musician. Pronouncedly a composer of the religious type, his capacity for releasing musical form, and giving expression to the human being, was narrow in comparison to that of even so circumscribed a musician as César Franck, in many points of style and attitude his best counterpart. For example, *Hora Novissima*, Parker's choral setting of Bernard de Morlaix's tender Rhythm on the Celestial Country and celebration of the mystic union of the Creature and the Creator, offers us the excellent and the mediocre, the magnificently textured

and the thinly textured, intermingled like the greener and greyer lichens on a mossy rock. Anything but unctuous, such numbers of the oratorio as the bass aria *Spe Modo Vivitur* and the tenor aria *Urbs Syon Aurea*, verge closely on conventional modern church music. . . . Parker undisputably had a tendency toward hard and angular writing, and another toward its complement, the florid and rhetorical; and for some strange and doubtless Puritanic reason, succumbed to one or the other most frequently in handling the solo voice. His songs are his least representative works: for the single *Across the Fields* we have several such indifferent affairs as *I Will Come Back* and *The Lark Now Leaves His Wat'ry Nest*. The conspicuous exception to Parker's comparative unsuccess with the solo voice occurs in the first act of *Mona*, during the heroine's immensely dramatic narrative. Yet, despite the distinction between the individual numbers of *Hora Novissima*, the work as a whole

remains, with *Les Béatitudes*, one of the few successors of Beethoven's loftily pitched Solemn Mass. The choice among the numbers of the oratorio is never between a merely good and merely bad; but between two sorts of things that, no matter how far the lesser diverges from the greater, still remain within the common bounds of the warm, the eloquent, the necessary. None of the less attractive numbers actually break the lofty mood and character of the work. We invariably feel that a musical state of being, something sweet and full, is lyrical; and the better pages, the choral passages, have a fine majesty and vigour. The vocal masses are moved with brio and skill, and the quartet, the a-capella and the accompanied choruses, sing the severe, strangely bitter-sweet and nonetheless masculinely yea-saying music, characteristic of Parker at his best; provocative, as nothing previous in American musical art, of a thoroughly unhesitating response.

Mona ranks with *Salomé*, *Pelléas*, *Sette*

Canzoni and the other notable post-Wagnerian operas; but like *Hora Novissima*, the score is uneven. The music of the first act is shortwinded, scarcely interesting before the heroine begins her great narrative. The prelude and dance-scene opening the second act, have lilting waltz-like cadences: very ordinary; anybody's music. And Mona's final speech gives evidences of labour. The strength and weakness of the score is illustrated by the prelude of the first act, where the poetic introduction in b-major is following by a theme in g suggesting Hymns Ancient and Modern and Sunday evening song-services. Parker was an organist, and his affection for the black ecclesiastical instrument at times got between him and the orchestra. Like Reger's, not a little of his writing has the thickness of organ-phrasing; and at moments, a psalmodizing vein overmasters it. Yet, upon the hymn tune of the prelude to *Mona* follows a broad, massively worked up climax; and after that,

comes a pentatonic passage of ripest inspiration. It is a music entirely Parker's own, characteristically bitter and sweet, passionate and reserved. Such pages of music, recurring through the score, give the little opera its permanence. One's admiration for it is greater today than at the time of its production in 1912. *Mona* is a veritable *drama per musica*. Not only action and music, but word and music, are well-mated in it. Parker worked to bring out the values of the text, and to achieve a declamation, and recitative and lyrical style, true to the genius of English speech; and *Mona's* narrative in Act I seems to us not only superb as music, but one of the artistic triumphs of English opera. The close of the first and second acts magnificently embody Parker's feeling for the choral medium. The love scenes glamorously straying voices and pearly pianissimos retain a rare enchantment. Above all, the third act, with its strong, mournful opening; and the orchestral soliloquy following the death of Gwynn

(the plangent brasses in acrid intervals) stands untroubled with colours that do not run; certainly the high mark of American music up to the most recent time; and perfectly worthy in its quality of the best scores of any contemporary European or American.

Why then didn't *Mona* hold the stage? Why was it withdrawn from the Metropolitan Opera after four or five performances? There are several explanations. One of them has to do with the quality of the performance itself. The Metropolitan cast a number of American-born members of its troupe for the principal rôles, with the consequence that the words were lost. The one articulate performance was that of Albert Reiss, a German, assigned to the rôle of Nial.

Another explanation has to do with the intelligence of the public which supports the Metropolitan Opera, beautifully illustrated by the caliber of the one American operatic work successful with it: *The King's Henchmen*, by Deems Taylor. The

characteristic of this ingenious composition is a thoroughgoing uninventiveness. The composer attacked not a single one of the problems presented to him, in a fresh spirit; allaying every one by the most trite and accepted means. Of course, this thoroughgoing uninventiveness of the music is in perfect keeping with the libretto by Edna St. Vincent Millay. For isn't that like so much of her work, a warming-over of the motives of past poetry?

Precisely this careful omission of everything not previously tried and done, recommended the work to the Metropolitan public. And not only to the public. Let no one suspect the New York newspaper critics of corruption. A more earnest group of gentlemen does not exist. No, if to a man they overplayed the importance of this preposterous affair, it was out of an indomitable devotion to the customary. Do they not all dote upon Tchaikowsky's music, let it but appear

over the name of some "modern" like Honneger, and under that of Pacific 231?

No matter. Opinion in these days is not made by the critics, but by the artists themselves. And what the artistic opinion of the composer of *The King's Henchman* is, may be gathered from the following anecdote. . . . A young American author resident in Paris, being called to America and forced to leave his sick wife in medical care, arranged a cable-code by which she could keep him informed of her state. There were three words in it. The first, Bach, signified, Best Possible Progress. The second, Verdi, signified, Slow but Steady Progress. The third, was Taylor; and the meaning was: Discouraging but not Dangerous.

Mona's day, however, is with a vivid America. In Parker's opera and in *Hora Novissima* we have, for the first time in America some strictly traditional music, in the word's true sense. While these works do not greatly enlarge the boundaries of musical art, either in their

material or in their conceptions, neither do they turn backward, or represent approximations to the forms and æsthetics of other men and times. They are a carrying over of elements inherent in race and environment, a building upon the experience of the past; and while the novelties they add to these elements and experiences are perhaps not of the first importance, the absence of such powerfully original elements is compensated for by the integrity, the autonomy, the fine selfhood of the edifice. That is to say that Horatio Parker, slighter than Brahms and Franck though he is, is still of their company; with Glinka, d'Indy, Hindemith and the other smaller authentic traditionalists. Parker's roots seem to have been half in the Protestant hymnology and half in the classic European music, just as Glinka's were half in Russian folk-song and half in eighteenth-century opera. Wherever they were, they bore a fine flower. . . . Whether the force that sent up this virile music of Parker's repre-

sented a last flicker or a new incandescence of the New England strain in American life, we cannot say; though the recent fecundity in artists shown by the Puritan stronghold—from E. A. Robinson to Phelps Putnam and Wallace Gould—makes us lean toward the happier interpretation. But whether it was a last gasp or a new beginning, this remains certain: that once again in New England there was sufficient force to carry a feeling, an earnestness about life into the world through an artistic medium; and free man for living, through sorrow, and through faith.

An even intenser rebirth of traditional, probably Scotch-Irish, musical norms is embodied in the music of Roy Harris. Himself a very late arrival on the musical horizon (his discovery being said to have resulted from one of Elley Ney's last forays into the west), the young Oklahoman constitutes one of the chief potentialities of American music; perhaps of modern music altogether. This eminence he primarily owes to the novelty and

strength of his melodic writing; though the originality and exquisiteness of certain of his harmonic passages, principally in the piano sonata, is scarcely inferior to it. Harris's melodic line has an immense amount of variety, a principle coincident with that of continuity. At its best, say in the scherzo of the sextet and the *alla cadenza* passage of the scherzo of the piano sonata, it is sustained with exceptional ability, and careers, and dances, and keeps on leaping and renewing itself with a refreshing vigour. What actually happens is that Harris persistently reconstitutes his themes on notes and intervals and with accents quite different from those on which they were first conceived; preserving nonetheless their original characters. The continuity meanwhile is sustained by the pitch; for, apparently atonal, Harris's melodies actually move about ground-notes that remain implicit in spite of the fact that the melodies themselves never come quite to repose on them. This gives his melodic conduct a certain irregularity

and looseness, makes it affect one like the sight of a body reeling from side to side, staggering a little and yet never actually losing its balance. Cowboys walk in that fashion, extremely awkwardly and extremely lithely; and so personal a piece as the scherzo of Harris's sextet brings to mind nothing so much as the image of a little cowboy running and reeling about on the instruments, toppling but never falling.

The pastoral image is not fortuitous. Harris's music, at least the most significant part of it, is unquestionably related to the Scotch-Irish folksong surviving in the United States, particularly to that vein of it surviving in the cowboy ballads. Its jig-like turn, its prevalently melancholy, mystical and defiant humours, its favoritism of the Scotch intervals, its bareness, awkwardness and unvoluptuousness, are undeniably symptomatic. At the same time, Harris's music obviously has the integrity of the thing not made but created. It is no mere repetition or re-

arrangement of the traditional folksong surviving in pastoral and agricultural America; no pastiche. Harris is no musical folklorist, as for instance Henry F. Gilbert was. His compositions have a style, a pervasive individuality, even in some of their vaguest pages. Hence, we are at liberty to assume that they represent one of those marvellous recrudescences, those new burgeonings of stalks long dry and seeds long buried, with which life with an incomparable magnificence, occasionally regales us. No doubt, Harris heard the peasant tunes preserved by his stock all through his childhood. No doubt, they are inextricable elements of his picture of life. Whether they actually formed his style, we cannot say. Possibly it might have formed itself much as we now know it, had no cowboy songs circulated in the world into which Harris was born. It is probable that his agrestic, hence conservative circumstances, made the style inevitable. The ubiquity of the Scotch-Irish

melodies doubtless merely speeded the inevitable process, helping to a rapid orientation the budding power.

Harris still figures somewhat more as a squire of music than as a fully spurred knight, largely for the reason that we do not yet possess a singly completely realized composition of his. With scarcely an exception, all of them are made up of movements somewhat unequal in value. It will be noticed that in speaking of Harris's extraordinary melodic line, we have had reference to the scherzi of his sextet and piano sonata. Well, practically all the instances of sinewy, racy, beautifully autochthonous writing found in his work occur under conditions of fast time. The slow tempi almost invariably marshal music that is slightly slack, slightly vague, and of undecided lineage. The melody is usually MacDowelllesque, the solemn sumptuous sweetish harmonizations recall the works of César Franck. The single possible exception to this rule is supplied by the piano sonata, whose slow

movement has an individual austerity and sharpness. But even this movement is slightly monotonous and prolix toward the close; in one spot dangerously reminiscent of one of Brahms's intermezzi. On the whole, the typical Harris composition remains a curious sort of now-you-see-it-and-now-you-don't; the discourse of a spirit speaking oftentimes wonderfully idiomatically and eloquently, and sometimes slackly and a little inexpressively. Just why there should be this disparity between Harris fast and Harris slow; between the scherzo and lento of his sextet, the finale and all the preceding movements of his symphony, say, it is almost impossible to tell. Perhaps the cause lies in the circumstance that the fast tempi embody the more motory, and the slow the more lyrical aspects of his impulse; and that, so far, the typical American psyche is more definitely motory? Perhaps it is part of the mere condition of youthfulness? But if the cause

of the disparity is obscure, the fact of it is anything but so.

Add to this unevenness a certain inexperience and undeftness with the forms and mediums employed, and the present probationary status of this frequently starkly individual musician becomes comprehensible. Occasionally, as in the fugato of the two polyrhythms in the last movement of the sonata, Harris shows a masterly control; and his feeling for the pianoforte is invariably rich and idiomatic. Form, however, is not his forte, and his feeling for instruments other than the great solo one, is uncertain. He lately spoiled some very fine ideas, employed in the three choruses on verses of Whitman's, by some inexpert vocal writing. The treatment of the choral body was turgid and unsympathetic, and the union between the pianos and the voices anything but effective.

Still, very few American composers; indeed, very few composers throughout the world, give greater promises of

growth than this awkward, serious young plainsman. An indubitable force is working about in him: he has put that awkward melodic line of his, born right out of the experience of his race, to important uses. Harris's allegro movements have impressive strength. They are authentically grandiose; bare, naked, and heroic. His range of emotion is somewhat broader than that of some other of his coevals æsthetically his superiors: while his music is inferior in point of architecture to Aaron Copland's, it communicates a more human experience; and while it is less savagely intense than Carlos Chavez's, it traverses a greater variety of moods. Harris's piano sonata carries the pathos of many lives beside his own. Its gaunt homely forms seem charged with the feeling of many struggling, patient, tragical existences on this continent; on the farms, in the homes, long ago, here now. Besides Harris appears to have the capacity for getting through with his experiences; his music has emotional progression and

reaches round conclusions. And it is doubtful whether if he does fill in the rugged outline of a composer he has drawn, any other American composer, original or traditional, will bulk larger than himself.

VI

AARON COPLAND: GEORGE GERSHWIN

MEANWHILE, an even intenser force is at work, adjusting men vigorously to a rapidly changing environment. Compositions of a marked individuality have recently begun appearing in America at the hands of Americans; and individuality, we know, is the sign and condition of the strong natural impulse. Great freedom is not, of course, to be found in the works of Copland, Chavez and Varèse, the members of this recent, most advanced class. Like so much American life, American music is still in bonds. We have no "great composers." But a certain warm integrity of style and independence in the release of form is current. New experiences in the sonorous field are forthcoming. Most important of all, music is commencing to represent the forces of American life and interpret them in a large way; to place us in what might have been a "shrieking wilderness

of steel," but is now an intelligible world. To be sure, a certain amount of integrity, novelty and vision are present in the examples of both the preceding classes of music, the eclectic no less than the traditional. But among the eclectics, the immersion in the stream of things is not direct: "protected"; and among the traditionalists, it is conservative, along racial lines. Only among the "moderns" is the contact quite spontaneous, in response to new, originally authoritative promptings; hence, it is only in their work that the elements of music appear entirely refreshed from the bath of life.

We meet this latest, most advanced sort of product, at first in American music, in the compositions of Aaron Copland. For while Copland's work is plainly that of a young man, wanting mellowness, wide inclusivity, and the warmest intensity, it is indubitably autonomous; and symbolic of the new world on every hard green page of it. We do not know where it came from. We merely know

that we have not met it before; at least, not in the guise of sonority; for it has a certain likeness to other things encountered in other spheres of life; and that it places us immensely alertly in the stream of metallic, modern American things.

The earmark of Copland's music is leanness, slenderness of sound, sharpened by the fact that it is found in connection with a strain of grandiosity. For we associate grandiosity with a Wagnerian fatness, thickness, and heaviness; and Copland's concerto, and the finale of his symphony, perhaps the two most elevated of his compositions, give us the pleasant shock of finding it both lithe and imponderous. The jarring piano and strings of the recent severe little trio, sound hard, like stone or metal things. Part of this general astringency flows from Copland's preference for shrill, cock-crowing, naked effects, and part from a predilection for staccato themes, with wide intervals and defiant flourishes. No doubt, it is to be connected with the style of

the later Strawinsky, indubitably influential on the young composer. It is quite possible that, had Strawinsky not recently taken to writing archaic series of major triads, we might not find Copland using them as extensively as he has done in his sober recent piece for string-quartet (later rewritten for full string orchestra). And it is a fact that, like Copland, several contemporary composers, notably Hindemith, affect an archaic severity and asperity of style; preferring the harsher, sharper, more grinding and nasal tones to the softer, more mellifluous and vibrant string-sounds loved by Wagner and the impressionists. Still, Copland's general slenderness is distinct and eminently individual. It is wiry. If he is a purist, he is an American one.

The whole of Copland's music, slow movements as well as rapid, are originally lively. A factor in this liveliness is the decided motoriness. By this, one means something more than mere rhythmicality, for the concept of rhythmicality is

included in the concept of music: there being no music without continuity of texture, logical succession and flow, unity and variety. What one means by this motoriness of Copland's, is its strong kinesis, its taut, instinctive "go." Wistful or burlesque, slow or fast, his pieces have enormous snap. Many of his rhythmic schemes are of the greatest originality. Even though certain of his favorite polyrhythms, the slow three eighths plus five eighths of the intermezzo of the suite *Music for the Theatre*, and the fast three eighths plus five eighths of the body of the concerto, are synthesized from jazz, Copland's method of piling them up is his own. The commercial music, of course, does not sustain these polyrhythms, sandwiching them in between customary measures, and shorting them. Copland however lets them have their will, sustaining them for long, thrilling, dizzy stretches. Other of his lively rhythms are equally personal, the hic-coughing beat of the scherzo of the sym-

phony, for example; iterated with a mad mechanic joy. And, whether careering over roofs or slowly balancing itself, this music remains a thing of abrupt, still logical changes, under high speed.

Another characteristic is the presence of control. Copland's music strikingly corroborates the theory that of all futilities, that of preaching about the necessity of discipline is the most futile, since discipline inheres in strength itself; and no strength comes unaccompanied by a direction to material, and a guiding sense of the extent of its own effectuality. Copland is one of the most critical of those at work to-day in the field of music. In fineness his sense of his materials is scarcely second to that of any contemporary musician; and we find him selecting ideas and discerning the potentialities of his subjects with an ever increasing acumen. It is only his earliest pieces that occasionally suffer from prolixity and rhythmical rigidity: in particular, certain dances of his ballet, *Grohg*. The mass of his compositions, even

the more jazzy, relatively inconsequential recent ones, the violin pieces, say, are made of finely appreciated material well put together. Copland seems to have a developed capacity for conceiving music coolly in terms of the technical problem. The distinct architecturality of his best pieces reveals it. The concertos, the recent pieces for strings, are primarily structures of interplaying forms, volumes, movements. Not that they are not largely expressive. The first part of the concerto especially has a penetrating lyricism, something of passionate extension; and the string piece, representative of Copland's leanly grand style, is elevated like the prelude to *Lohengrin*. Nor are these architectural pieces invariably severe. Copland has a taste for hot colours and garish jazziness, perhaps a happy consequence of his oriental-American psyche; and his work is exciting with all sorts of percussive brazen brilliance. Nonetheless, the great interest of his music remains the architectural one, the interest of the in-

dependent, projected, self-sufficient object. And in their structurality, their faithfulness to the line of strength, his tonal edifices resemble nothing so much as steel cranes, bridges, and the frames of skyscrapers before the masons smear them with their stonework.

Of course, this musicianship of Copland's is still in its nubile stage. His gift is decidedly proficient but small, as yet so immature that it makes the impression not so much of something human, as of something coltlike: all legs, head, and frisking hide; cantering past on long uncertain stilts, the body oddly small in proportion to the motorpower, the head huge and as wooden and devilish as that of a rocking-horse. It's an amusing affair, in the incompleteness of organs, limbs, and skin; charming with the awkwardness of the large young thing not long from the mother. Impressive, too: since it's so conspicuously the colt of American brass and momentum, of all that's swift and daring, aggressive and unconstrained in our

life; blood-brother of the new architecture and the other constructive flights of the bold temperaments. And still, it is a colt. With all his grandiosity and *élan*, Copland has not yet found a largely symbolic and inclusive form for his gift; or achieved, symphony and concerto notwithstanding, an expression of prime importance. A certain meagerness of experience, a uniformity in his moods is not to be overlooked. Indeed, and in spite of his recent sallies in string and piano-trio music, he may almost be said to have only two tempers, and to swing regularly from one to the other. The first, a rather wistful pastoral mood, a mood of lonely beginnings, early April afternoons, gray clouds, gurgling frogs, and perhaps a single, always single, blackbird, has contributed the first movement of the symphony, the third movement of Music for the Theatre, the violin nocturne, the introduction to the concerto, and the flute and clarinet song, As It Fell Upon a Day. The other, a wild, extrava-

gant, cackling state, full of motor-madness, the old cat and fiddlesticks and the lunatic moon, is the progenitor of the early piece for string quartet, the second movement of the symphony, the second and fourth sections of Music for the Theatre, the violin serenade, the choral setting of Ezra Pound's An Immortality, and the body of the concerto. Of course, other moods do register in Copland's music. Neither the finale of the symphony, the recent piece for strings, or the reflections on a Jewish theme for piano-trio, fit into either of the dominant categories. Nor are the realizations of the two states ever monotonous or unprogressive. Indeed, they have become impressively stronger with the passing of the few years in which Copland's career has run. One has merely to compare the little song after Barnefield with the massive opening of the concerto, and the early piece for string quartet with the body of the work for piano and orchestra, to gauge the wide extent of his growth. By and large, none-

theless, Copland's work is contained in them; the more the pity since both moods are fundamentally incomplete; twin eccentric halves of the deeply swung state of feeling. The one is nostalgic; the other ironical.

To a certain degree, their almost absolute monarchy over the composer is to be ascribed to the fact that he found both of them, or at least their idiom, in jazz; the nostalgic one proceeding more from the blues, the ironical one more from jazz proper. Copland is one of the composers who have laid hold of the norms of our popular music, and utilized them for artistic purposes. But the mere fact that both are adumbrated by jazz, does not entirely account for their grip on him. That must be subjectively conditioned; for if Copland has helped himself to jazz effects, he has always done so independently, and inventively; anything but slavishly. A great difference exists between his use of them, and that of the great number of his contemporaries who

have dug in the new mine. The European experimenters, for example, have done very little with what they have found. The music they have made with jazz rhythms and effects is of small actual value. The ragtime section of *Parade*, the ballet of Satie's that started the movement to convert rag into musical values, is scarcely more than a quotation, without considerable ingenuity or distinction. Hindemith's brutal jazz pages lack wit and smartness; the score of Krenek's *Jonny Spielt Auf* is an hastily clapped-together affair, of little intrinsic interest. The most successful European jazz music is undoubtedly to be found in Milhaud's ballet, *La Création du Monde*, with its lengthy section based on a foxtrot measure. But while this work is one of the best sustained and most charming of the prolific Frenchman's innumerable compositions, the jazz section is characteristically soft and homesick; almost timid in comparison with the body of Cop-

land's concerto and its exuberantly piled-up polyrhythms.

The American parallels of these experiments are equally indifferent. Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Piano Concerto* and *An American in Paris* have found a good deal of popular favor; and Gershwin himself is assuredly a gifted composer of the lower, unpretentious order; yet there is some question whether his vision permits him an association with the artists. He seems to have little feeling for reality. His compositions drowse one in a pink world of received ideas and sentiments. The *Rhapsody in Blue* is circus-music, pre-eminent in the sphere of tinsel and fustian. In daylight, nonetheless, it stands vaporous with its second-hand ideas and ecstasies; its old-fashioned Lisztian ornament and brutal, calculated effects, not so much music, as jazz dolled up. Gershwin's concerto has an equal merit. The opening of the second movement, the Blues section, is charming and atmospheric; but the work is utterly bare of the impulsion

toward a style which every living thing exhibits; and, like the Rhapsody, scarcely transcends the level of things made to please an indiscriminating public. An American in Paris is poorer in themes than either of its predecessors; and when, after losing its way, the music suddenly turns into the lively somewhat meaningless sort of flourish usually supplied the dramatic finales of musical comedy first-acts, we seem to hear Gershwin's instrument, like Balaam's ass, reproving the false prophet; directing him to the sphere congenial to his gift.

The experiments of William Grant Still with jazz and the blues compare favorably with those of Gershwin; but the difference between his jazz music and Copland's is still huge. For Copland has actually absorbed jazz motives and correlated them with the developments of the past. Hence, the difference between his music and that of the other experimenters. For while they have taken jazz much as they found it, that is, impregnated with a

superficial spirit, Copland has driven it far beyond its current uses, and substituted the expression of an almost Rabelaisian irony for its customary parody and blandishment.

For this reason, then, we find ourselves unwilling to believe that, if Copland's still dominant two moods are fragmentary and eccentric, they are so because he was constrained by their origins. No; if they are still slightly unsatisfactory to what in ourselves demands a maturer experience, it is undoubtedly because in Copland we have the youth of an original musicianship itself. What indeed is more specifically boyish than the ambivalence of feelings of exception, separation, and reckless power and affirmation bordering upon the satiric and the unconcerned; of the sense of being outside and under things, and the sense of dancing on top of them in sheer mechanical exuberance?

A development, with its consequent amplification of meaning, and extension of the number of patterns in his art casts

its shadow before it; in the string-music, in the etching-like trio (so much drier than Bloch's opulent Hebraicisms); particularly in the last movement of the symphony. By no means his most successful page, this movement is extremely suggestive of the larger personality, the more earthfast, inclusive form, potential in the man and his musicianship. It was written, significantly, to gather and resolve the contradictory moods of the preceding introduction and scherzo, characteristically nostalgic and mechanical, and it embodies a feeling of things neither beneath them nor above them, but powerfully one with them and released through them; reconciling the two warring halves of a personality and clearing the way for its growth. True, the form of this finale is stiff; wanting the elegance and logic of the tender plaintive introduction and hiccoughing, jerking, machinery-mad scherzo; and leaving the brilliant little symphony half suspended in the air. Nonetheless, for all its abrupt transitions

and lumbering volumes, the movement touches deep stratas. It is both grandiose and ardent, holding some state of being that is of our swift mechanical day and yet superior to it, in control of it; and converting man's new obstreperous, mechanical arms into agents of beatitude. And it gives us a new sense of what is working around in Copland, and what his music is about. That control of the new environment, that attempt to humanize it, to be one with it and make it express human values—is it not strangely analogous to something in which the whole administrative, thinking, executive community is engaged? Is Copland, struggling to handle mechanical, impersonal rhythms in a deep, exalted spirit, anything but an integral part of a movement attempting the same in practical fields? For us, he most indisputably is not. But then his position is merely that of any independent musician, any important artist. The psyche of the artist is an integral part of the battlefield of life; per-

haps the battlefield made apparent. Its conflicts, its defeats and victories are those of the community essentialized, objectified. It is the cross-section. To know what is going on in the life of a civilization, to measure its force and direction, you have but to examine its art.

VII

CARLOS CHAVEZ

INTENSITY and passion slightly greater than Copland's are to be found in the music of Carlos Chavez. And while Chavez is a native of Mexico and a simple visitor in New York, his work is so manifestly un-European, so deeply rooted in western soil and kin to the developments in the United States proper, that for the present at least, it necessarily figures in a canvass of the American field.

Its individuality is striking. Idiom, technique and feeling are equally personal, equally special. Chavez's idiom is decidedly, originally primitive; dissimilar to that of Moussorgsky, the early Stravinsky, and the rest of the eminent modern primitivists. Moussorgsky's rudeness, bareness and humility, for example, is directly related to that of the Russian folk-song, upon which he modelled his style; and we find it characteristically slavic, warm and melancholy, submissive and

abulic. The idiom of Strawinsky, too, more voluntary than Moussorgsky's though it is, springs as directly from the Russian soil, and remains folksong like; though elements abstracted from the music of the urban masses, little organ-grinder waltzes and side-show flourishes, and rhythms influenced by and directly imitative of the play of machinery, have given it a special raciness, hardness, and cosmopolitanism. That of Bartok, another modern primitivist, stems from the Magyar folksong much as Moussorgsky's from the Russian; exhibiting its unique pep and half-oriental mournfulness. Chavez's connection, on the other hand, is with the American soil and the savage chants of the Indians. Himself part amerindian, the atonal sing-song of his lyrical themes strongly recalls the crowing and cackling of the red-man in his dusty pueblos; while the buzz and rattle of his fast music has much the effect of the dry, rasping tones to be produced on Aztec instruments. His idiom is poor, *abrutie*, rigid and ter-

rifically held in; his ideas, little ascensions and regressions up and down a short ladder of notes. The graceful Slavonic echo-like interjection of notes a fourth above, never comes to ornament his melodic line. Chavez's is the least expressive, most stolid and monotonous of all modern primitive idioms.

The primitivism extends to the very mimetic ideas to which Chavez has married the music of his ballet *The Four Suns*. The four suns are the four geological periods of the Aztec codices, worlds of water, wind, fire and lava, and earth, and the dances portray them in the terms of an Aztec rite. It also pervades the style and form of compositions. Chavez's writing is bare, brusque, unvoluptuous. The attacks, transitions and rhythmic sequences are excessively abrupt; the periods and movements compressed; squat as Toltec divinities; the manner hard and relentless. Teasing suspensions, arrests and hollow octaves, and tattoo-like themes and dry staccato volumes, are prevalent.

The very productions of his probationary years, the little experimental sonatinas for piano, for piano and violin, and piano and cello, the racy little improvisations called 36 and the symphonic fragment Horse Power, are filled with intimations of this dry, laconic style. Reminiscent of Ravel as it is, the short, compact, forceful piano sonatina has a savage sing-song, amerindian in its rigidity and peculiar earthly coarseness. The third bar supplies a beautiful instance of Chavez's abrupt suspensions, so accessory to the plasticity of his music, in the arrest of a bit of three-part counterpoint in quavers, on a sudden crotchet. The sere off-hand little 36 is full of the drum-like effects, brittle pizzicati, and racy unceremonious rhythms distinguishing the sturdy young Latin's later scherzo-music. During a few bars (*meno mosso*) the strangely, almost insensitively articulate violin and piano sonatina recalls the pentatonic stateliness of Moussorgsky. Then, suddenly, an idiosyncrasy intervenes. As

the song of the two contrapuntally opposed instruments swells, and the full reiteration of the theme threatens a climax, the violin suddenly adds a polytonic opposition to its persistent counterpoint. At the moment of largest sound and broadest intensity of expression, it precipitously drops into a new key while the piano continues in the old; and utters its cry a semitone below the expected tone, continuing flat through the succeeding bars of cramp-like vehemence. The effect is simultaneously brutal and powerful, strangely miserable and immensely gratifying; like the exaltation of some rudimentary type, some Piltdown man.

As for Chavez's recent works, the piano-sonata, *The Four Suns*, and the new Mexican Pieces, first acquaintance with them reveals them rude and almost unlyrical. Extreme examples of his style, their rhythmic patterns seem almost incoherent. Only gradually do they begin to speak; huskily, remotely at first, then more persuasively, till, finally, the bony

structure, the uncomfortably compressed themes and periods, the illogical rhythmic flow, become logical, coherent, authentically expressive. The music of *The Four Suns* is full of iterative amerindian rhythms, shrill and piping tones, ferocious and remote. While the score might not have found its present shape had not the ballet-movements of *Petrushka* and *Sacre* gone before, its mixed rudeness and shyness and austerity have the novelty that distinguishes Chavez's music. It seems artistocratically remote by the side of the Russian work; bare of Stravinsky's sumptuosity and headiness, extravagance and booze. *The Four Suns* has an almost distemper-like quality, as if it, too, were inscribed upon a temple-wall in Chitchen-Itza; and even when it comes closer through familiarity, and admits us to a strange kind of childlike, and ferocious joy, it remains reserved, under-spoken, never unbuttoning feeling. As for the piano-sonata, it is as dry as a plant lost in sands. The leanness, relentlessness and

architecturality, and the strictness of its beat, are almost intolerable. The themes are at once innocent and precise, drum-like and decisively rhythmic; the treatment of the piano is essentially percussive. The four compact, boldly opposed little movements are predominantly staccato and martellato, moving in vigorous abrupt rhythms, and with jerky accents and flinty sounds that appear to strike sparks from the anvil the keyboard has become. Hollow octaves and single unsupported voices are frequent; likewise Chavez's favorite suspensions, brutal deceptions and interminations; while the impressionistic pedal is completely junked. There is no voluptuousness, no machine-like thunder in this music. At moments, while the composer himself plays it, one seems to be listening to modal, polytonic music executed as if the music were Bach and the performer a pupil of the French conservatory. Everything from the precise finger-tips! The fugue is bald, excessively compressed

and wry. The scherzo-movement is a savage dusty bit, another one of those flighty rhapsodic passages in which Chavez lets us hear an echo of the atrocious rattlings and scratchings of Aztec instruments. Yet, gradually, some softness, colour and flow, become sensible. Feeling begins to move through the austere and cryptic stimulants, a little surprised at them, and grateful. We are like trees that have gained foothold on mountain slides.

This primitive turn of Chavez's may be a form of traditionalism. The composer is a devoted student of Peruvian and Aztec music; indeed of all the relics of primordial American culture. And, no doubt, this new music is as much the flower of an heredity as that of Harris, for example. What, nonetheless, advances Chavez's work beyond the Oklahoman's is the agency of an objective attitude and approach entirely personal to the composer; as largely his invention as the hard, primitive idiom and style. Chavez writes an actual classic music; a music that is orig-

inal and American and still related to the naïve, undescriptive, external forms of eighteenth-century European music. This classicism does not parallel the return toward the past of that of several eminent Europeans. It is not the product of a sudden "conversion." Chavez has joined no church, of England, France, or Mexico. We do not find him genuflecting before the works of Lancelot Andrewes or John Sebastian Bach; and his art coquettes neither with academies nor other agencies of "order." Classicism with him is an involuntary footing; not a snobbish pose; and his earlier works show its development and growth in consciousness. From the very first, each piece of his has developed from the intention of solving a problem with purely musical means. The completeness with which the score of his ballet *The New Fire*, a very early, still very dainty and Debussian forerunner of *The Four Suns*, eschews pictoriality, is significant. The three little sonatinas are architectural, two and three voice poly-

phonies. Much of their interest lies in the balance of sections, the disposition of the tabloid movement considered as weight and mass. Though disabused in feeling, they are neither cynical or burlesque. 36 indeed furnishes some of the slack, debonaire and crude-coloured music, the vaudeville, "from Missouri" art which the Parisian Six in their little heyday thought they were creating. And while Chavez's symphonic fragment *Horse Power* is anything but unprecedented—symphonic works woven of favourite Spanish and Spanish-American rhythms and tunes being common products of the musical ferment in Spain and Latin-America—this piece of frankly popular inspiration is distinguished by a polyphony, extended even to the contrapuntally treated orchestral timbres, no less than by its prodigious snap, loud good humour, the brilliance of its elevenths and thirteenths, the shrilling of the reedy clarinets, the brittle, percussion-like pizzicati.

Where the works of the pseudo-classical Europeans chill and disaffect, those of Chavez persuade. The sonata, the great ballet, are strictly and satisfactorily on the plane of "things." The Blues and the Foxtrot are little polyrhythmical, polytonic inventions; good modern successors to Bach's immortal ones. This is not to say that Chavez variations of the classic forms are necessarily as good as those of the masters. There would be no sense in pretending that Chavez is an entirely expert technician, or that his forms are not fairly rudimentary—simple two and three voice polyphonies—or that there was not a marked narrowness and fixity of feeling, even in his best and latest work. His range is decidedly a limited one; he is anything but an exuberant creator. Still, smallness of scope and straightness of feeling notwithstanding, Chavez's method of composition is sufficiently involuntary and virginal in its classicism to make us recognize the form of commencing cultures in it, and incipient Adam de la

Halle, Josquin des Prés or Haydn of the fresh American world, in himself. There is the corroborative feeling and spirit of the music. Classicism is, of course, the principle of all first-expressions; since, like all youths, all incipient culture-worlds are "naïve" (in Schiller's sense); little sentimental; hence objective, external, distemper-like; architectural and reserved in their expression. And it is precisely the feeling of such a world that clings humus-like to Chavez's music! Only listen to the "content" of the expression! What if his earlier pieces are still a little "emotional," Brahmsianly solemn, Schumannesquely langourous? The Four Suns, the piano sonata and the Mexican Pieces bristle with epical, "objective" feeling of beginnings, virginal circumstances, green fruits. The ballet speaks of thin spring suns, sprouting sparse vegetation, stiff motion of colts, and things not long out of wintry cerements. Life is bare—where it points—stripped of things, and of hysteria, too. Matters are down to

essentials, the level of life that of survival; and it is beautiful, so, with a real, simple satisfactoriness. And the sonata seems to affirm some power of endurance, some capacity of life's to adjust to a raw, unbroken soil. It is the song of breath that persists in coming hard, and of hands where there is no abundance of objects able to gratify touch. And still, the grim sense of power, extracting serenity from sensations of durity and iciness and angularity; meeting and controlling sadistic elements, natural and human; drawing water from the derisive rocks! The joy of the new, inaccessible, difficult place; held at last!

A Pan-American renaissance is in progress: a re-birth of an integral new world on the one wrecked with the Aztecs. An absurd conclusion? Not at all. For if you say "original classical music," you imply a nativity. And even the most rabid "little Mexican" would hesitate to claim Chavez's music for his own land alone. What Chavez finally embraces is general-

ly American; and the quality of the embrace is germane to us, too. Besides, there is the corroboration of Chavez's rampant Pan-Americanism which led him to make connections not with Paris or Vienna or Berlin, all of which bore him, but with New York. Possibly were his enthusiasm unaccompanied by the music, we might be at liberty to disregard it. But the music forbids. We must accept Chavez's rampant Americanism for the conscious aspect of that fusion between what is unconscious in the artist himself and what lies beyond him in the form of objective nature, in this case the base of a new culture-world.

Perhaps we are a trifle late in our discovery, and ungrateful toward a number of deserving North-Americans? Harmonizations like Chavez's, of within and without, have not been entirely uncommon of late in our own republic. The soil has spoken through painters as well as through poets. Still, there is a justification for our sudden jubilee. First of all, Chavez

is a genuine classicist, a new phenomenon; and secondly he is a Latin-American; assuring us of our direction by proving it unsophistical; not confined to a single American political state; the work of general forces, which know so little of Rio Grandes.

Indeed, Chavez's music makes one consider the possibility whether leadership in the harmonization of our western life with the spirit of the American soil, may not devolve upon the artists of the southern republic? Conditions certainly favour such an event. There was a culture in Mexico before the Conquest, providing the little plant of a new civilization with an *espalier*. We, on the contrary, possess no ladder; our predecessors having found little save barbarism before them. Nonetheless, we don't despair of our own republic; particularly since we have Chavez's laconic assurance that a Pan-American revival is indeed in progress; and that work from the rest of the hemisphere will shortly be coming to us, in

ever greater quantity, as his own, now; rendering us indifferent to anything except the problem in hand and life as we feel it; touching us again with the spirit of an immense latency.

VIII

EDGAR VARÈSE

BUT the greatest fullness of power and of prophecy yet come to music in America, lodges in the orchestral composition of Edgar Varèse. While they, too, like the works of Copland and of Chavez, are minor underneath the stars, relatively unvaried and circumscribed; they nonetheless, as products of a dogged, developed personality, and of large and original exceptions, display a considerable degree of freedom.

Following a first hearing of these pieces, the streets are full of jangly echoes. The taxi squeaking to a halt at the crossroad recalls a theme. Timbres and motives are sounded by police-whistles, bark and moan of motor-horns and fire-sirens, mooing of great sea-cows steering through harbour and river, chatter of drills in the garishly, lit fifty-foot excavations. You walk, ride, fly through a world of steel and glass and concrete, by rasping,

blasting, threatening machinery become strangely humanized and fraternal; yourself freshly receptive and good-humoured. A thousand insignificant sensations have suddenly become interesting, full of character and meaning; gathered in out of isolation and disharmony and remoteness; revealed integral parts of some homogeneous organism breathing, roaring and flowing about.

For the concert-hall just quit, overtones and timbres and rhythms corresponding to the blasts and calls of the monster town had formed part of a clear, hard musical composition; a strange symphony of new sounds, new stridencies, new abrupt accents, new acrid opulencies of harmony. Varèse has done with the auditory sensations of the giant cities and the industrial phantasmagoria, their distillation of strange tones and timbres much what Picasso has done with the corresponding visual ones. He has formed his style on them. Or, rather, they have transformed musical style in him by their effect on

his ears and his imagination; much as Picasso's city walls, billboards, newspapers, and chimney-pots have helped the Parisian magician to his original and intensely personal idiom. Like Picasso, Varèse has used his new sonorous medium in interests other than those of descriptivity. He has never imitated city sounds, as he is sometimes supposed to have done. He is not to be classed with the Marinetti-Pratella group of new instrumentalists. The members of that group did have the imitative idea. They argued that modern life could be expressed only through the noises of its practical, mechanical, unconscious activities; and built instruments to convey them. Varèse, however, did not begin with a theory, or a literary idea of representation and expression. He is a musician; and if the auditory sensations of modern life have developed the musical medium under his hands, it is merely because they have sought him out. It appears that he has always been extremely susceptible to acute high strident sounds.

He will tell you, that as a boy, while reading the *Leather Stocking Tales*, the feeling of the prairies became associated in his mind with the sound of a piercing, bitter-high whistle. This image has persisted in his imagination, although he has never heard its actual replica anywhere in nature. Apparently, he receives impressions of mechanical sounds part consciously, part unconsciously. In *Hyperprism*, one of his most daring compositions, a very shrill high c-sharp is reiterated several times; and during the first performance of the work, this tone produced convulsive laughter in the audience. But when the composer returned to his home that evening, and sat working into the night, he heard from somewhere over the city, a very familiar sound, a siren; and realized that he had been hearing it for many nights, over six months; and that the tone was exactly a very shrill high c-sharp.

Nor, for that matter, has Varèse added new sounds, new timbres, new com-

binations to the musical palette for the mere sake of enlarging the musician's instrument. He is sharply to be distinguished from his amiable confrère, Henry Cowell, a musician until very recently chiefly interested in the production of novel sounds on the pianoforte. (Not that Cowell is entirely devoid of musical gifts. Still, if he figures at all in the company of the musicians, it is primarily in the rôle of the skilled mechanic. Some of his innovations are not even effective: the introduction of the thunderstick of the Hopi Indians, for example. The thunderstick has a very charming sonority, resembling that of a wind-machine capable of subtlest modulations. No doubt, it's a dead ringer for the voice of God the Father. But it's an uneconomical device, requiring so great an effort to manipulate it, that one feels Cowell might with far greater profit have turned his energies into experimentation with small electric fans, and sought for an equivalent of the soaring sound through regulation of the

little mechanisms.) No, if his artistic medium has developed and spread under Varèse's hands, it is only because his entire activity is directed toward encompassing the reality of our swift prodigious world in its terms.

That is to say, that Edgar Varèse follows in the steps of Wagner, of Debussy, of the younger Strawinsky and of all the modern musicians not so much interested in the creation of beautiful objects as in the penetration and registration of the extant. He, too, is a kind of philosopher or sacred doctor, hearing the logic of things, the way the world is put together as other logicians may see or feel it; and his art is a sort of revelation, made through the manipulation of the musical medium. All works of art are such; but Varèse's is one of the conscious truth-seekers; and his music is a genuine declaration of things as they are; not the mere illustration of a system, in the manner of Richard Strauss, for Varèse thinks in the terms of his medium; while Strauss's ideas ap-

pear to be literary, extra-musical. Varèse, no doubt, has learned considerably from Strauss, in the way of dense instrumentation; just as he has learned from Mahler, whose development of the orchestral rôle of percussive instruments foreshadows his own prodigious one. Still, Varèse is to be placed entirely in the company of the composers who have actually philosophized in music.

What if his music sounds crasser, profaner than theirs; with its sirens and rattles, and all that gives it affinity with the ground-bass of the city? His high tension and elevated pitch, excessive velocity, telegraph-style compression, shrill and subtle coloration, new sonorities and metallic and eerie effects are merely the result of his development of the search-and-discovery principle in the twentieth century world. Indeed Varèse has not a little of the synoptic gift of mind that made Wagner so sweepingly big. Only, in the case of Varèse's music, the synthesis of the industrial mathematical and sci-

entific perspectives has been made in a mood more germane to America than to Europe. The conviction, the sense of direction responsive in Varèse to the fast-moving, high-pitched, nervous, excited reality surrounding us, as inventions, research, new proximities, new means of communication, new intuitions have shaped it; the feeling of pitch and beat making its multitudinous disorderly details simple, and setting him moving in harmony with it toward a common goal, indeed are not to be distinguished from the vivacity and unconstraint, speed and daring of the pioneer-spirit of our best American life. His music significantly orientates us to a kind of world to which America is closer than Europe is, a new world not only of the new scientific and mathematical perspectives but of the latent, the immanent, free of prejudice and habit and dogma: the whole glittering region of the unrealized. Besides, he is the poet of the tall New Yorks; his music showing a relation with the "na-

ture" of the monster-towns paralleling that of the elder music to the "country," and revealing the new nature to man.

Characteristically, the first of Varèse's compositions to utter and signify and declare this newest world and newest world-feeling, is called "Amériques." It is also, excepting the charming little "Deux Offrandes," the first of his personal pieces. The preceding ones, written before the hegira of the young composer in 1916, appear to have been apprentice works. At least, their titles, "La Chanson des Jeunes Hommes" (1905), "La Rhapsodie Romane" (1906), "Prelude a la Fin d'un Jour" (1908), "Mehr Licht" (1911), and "Le Cycle du Nord" (1912), suggest as much; though one of them at least, "Mehr Licht," has a typical cast. "Amériques" itself is something of a transitional expression, exhibiting the peculiarities of such pieces. Its inner coherency is weaker than that of its successors: there is a somewhat too arbitrary opposition of volumes of sonority in it, a somewhat too regu-

lar alternation of monstrous *tutti* with more thinly scored passages. Echoes of the *Sacre* momentarily obtrude, in the initial theme for low flute and bassoon, and in certain elephantine rhythms. The feeling of abnormality too, is a trifle Berlioz-like, and obviously expressed. The raucous sluggish symphony, with its immense metallic sonorities, sharply appreciated vulgarities, and over-delicate contrasts, actually borders on the caricatural. Still, by and large, the sonority of *Amériques* is extraordinarily novel and happy. The title, eternal symbol of new worlds awaiting discovery, is beautifully justified by it; had Varèse no other scores, this would nonetheless proclaim him a virtuosic genius with the full, complex, dense-sounding modern orchestra in his veins. There is a distinct quality about it; the style being both metallic and strident, and aerial and delicate, like the reflection of a prairie sunset on steel rails. *Amériques* contains Varèse's first realization of percussive music; the battery, daring-

ly augmented, constitutes an independent family and in several passages plays alone. The bars with the triangle *pianissimo* amid the full percussion are especially bewitching. So too are the effects gotten from the suspended cymbal struck with the triangle's metal rod. Perhaps the most original writing appears half-way through the piece, where the violins die away in the very high minor ninths over the pedal of the horns and basses.

Immediately after *Amériques* come *Hyperprism* and *Octandre*; and both are the work of an artist in control of his forces. The slightly arbitrary sequences and oppositions constraining us in *Amériques* no longer obtrude. *Hyperprism*, for example, is notable for its sympathetic treatment of the musical medium, its great naturalness of movement. Sounds come in waves, a single sound advancing; then, as it fades, another rising to take its place: the sequence corresponding curiously to that in which the unconscious ear synthesizes the vibrations of objective na-

ture. We hear somewhat as Varèse writes. The movement of this fantastic little symphony, with its quality of percussive sound conjuring up fragments and vistas of the port and the industrial landscape invested with new magic, is actually extremely relaxed, quiet, gay, even a little jazzy. Hyperprism is in fact the scherzo among Varèse's compositions; for while the thematic material is subject to continual emotional modifications, no single experience being allowed to repeat itself; and while the score is built up of telegraphically sharp and concise phrases; and the form is a counterpoint of rhythms, the tension is less fierce and dramatic than it is in the later *Intégrales* and *Arcanes*. Hyperprism is also notable for its extremely artistic and discreet use of an astounding battery of anvils, slapsticks, Chinese blocks, lion roars, rattles, sleighbells, and sirens; and for such magnificences as the introduction of the sleighbells in the sudden *calmato a tempo*, and the full brass in the last over-

powering measures. Octandre, too, represents an advance; recapturing the tense impulse of *Amériques* and finding a happy form for it. The sounds of the eight instruments: flute alternating with piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, and double-bass, are uttered with held-in, stubbornly emitted power, that seems to shape and twist not only brass notes but brazen and steely objects in its ejaculations. The three tiny movements stand solid as metal objects, hard of surface, machine-sharp of edge, deeply colorful at moments, and beautiful with economicality and concentration. The idea is continually developed. There is no doubling of parts. The instruments play in extreme independence, and in a very terse and concentrated counterpoint. Apparent slight reminiscences of Wagner (the "solitude" of *Tristan* Act III, in the opening recitative; the re-iterated e-flat, which commences the scene between Siegfried and Wotan, in the close of the second section

with its marvelously stammering clarinet) disappear during a second hearing.

In *Integrales*, we have a kind of cubical music. This piece, one of Varèse's most representative compositions, exhibits his polyphonic art in all its opposition to that of Stravinsky, now so favored abroad. While Stravinsky's polyphony is fundamentally linear (most polyphony is, no doubt), Varèse's is somehow more vertical (you must ask the professors); in fact, his music moves in solid masses of sound, and he holds it very rigorously in them. Marianne Moore abhors connectives no more energetically than he. Even the climaxes do not break the essential cubism of Varèse's form. The more powerful emphases merely force sound into the air with sudden violence, like the masses of two impenetrable bodies brought into collision. The severity of edge and impersonality of the sonorities themselves (there are no strings in the orchestra of "*Integrales*"), the peculiar balance of brass, percussion and

woodwind, the piercing golden screams, sudden stops and lacunæ, extremely rapid crescendi and diminuendi, contribute to the squareness. The memorable evening of its baptism, *Integrales* resembled nothing so strongly as shining cubes of freshest, brightest brass and steel set in abrupt pulsing motion. And for one impressionable assistant, they were strangely symbolic. They were not merely sounds like metals. They were sounds strangely related to the massive feeling of American life, with its crowds, city piles, colossal organizations, mass production, forces and interests intricately welded; sounds that for a moment revealed them throbbing, moving, swinging, glowing with clean, daring, audacious life. A new power exulted in them. Majestic skyscraper chords, grandly resisting and progressing volumes, ruddy sonorities and mastered ferocious outbursts, sung it forth. For the first time in modern music, more fully even than in the first section of *Le Sacre*, there sounded an equivalent of

Wotan's spearmusic. But in this case, the feeling of German power had something to do with the lifeforms of the democratic, collectivist new world.

The most definitive piece of Varèse's, nonetheless, is *Arcanes*, the latest of them to be presented. *Arcanes* is of course the best example of his method of composition; and revelation of the tendency of the forces playing through him. In form, it is an "immense and liberal" development of the passacaglia pattern, and an exposition, scherzo, and recapitulation. A basic idea, the banging eleven-note phrase which commences the work *fortissimo*, is subjected to a series of expansions and contractions, cast for a grand orchestra heavily reinforced by percussion. The treatment yields a series of metallic tone-complexes compulsive of extraordinary space-projection. Bristling with overtones as a castle with turrets and a dinosaur with warts, the almost unbearably straining chords shoot feeling tall into distances. Varèse's method creates a number

of air-pockets, suspensions of sound between various thematic metamorphoses; and the volumnear accentuation resulting from them augments the excitement of the relationship between the strangely towering, reaching, bursts of sound. And, as the high-tensioned piece proceeds, feelings seem to find cold interstellar space; material volumes to signal and respond to each other; and a fantastic habituation to the gloomy valleys and arches of the non-human universe obtain. We have previously had music born of biologicistic world-feeling—*Le Sacre du Printemps* is the dance of the human bacillus, certainly—and before that both *Das Rheingold* and *Tristan und Isolde* exhibited music corresponding with evolutionary theories—but *Arcanes* apparently is the first piece of music harmonious with the *welt-anschauung* of modern mathematical physics, and corresponding with science's newest sensations about matter. The final variation of a subsidiary theme, given to contrabass-clarinete, bassoon,

clarinet, and muted trumpets and trombones, came like a long-awaited answer to intuitive searches in some unexplored portion of the cosmos, or sudden vision of a new constellation hanging jewel-like before the telescope's eye.

On the title-page of this amazing score stands a quotation from the Hermetic Philosophy of the "Monarch of Arcana," Paracelsus the Great: "One star exists higher than all the rest. This is the Apocalyptic star. The second star is that of the ascendant. The third is that of the elements and of these there are four: so that six stars are established. Besides these, there is still another star, Imagination, which begets a new star and a new heaven." As appropriately as this fragment of scientific poetry, "Arcanes" might have born Leonardo da Vinci's wondrous phrase, "The greater the consciousness, the greater the love." For its impulse is not only *Bemächtigungstrieb*, desire to control and dominate an environment as it is found in scientists,

technicians, and engineers; strongly as that sublimation may have influenced it. (Varèse originally studied engineering, his father's profession.) The impulse is one of unity, or perfection, borne of a wholeness in the psyche and moving toward a condition satisfactory to the entire man. The large, smoky, and metallic sonorities; the gorgeous explosive violence, its brutal surges so singularly mixed with the feeling of thought and cerebral processes; the dry nervous vibration of the Chinese blocks; the high erotic tension controlled with a rare sensitivity, embody the spirit of many experimental groups, artistic, scientific, moral and plumb their common bourne. Deep within, one feels the force which thrusts up towers of steel and stone to scrape the clouds, and creates new instruments and combinations, and forms new field-theories, seeking, on many fronts, here, there, again and again, to break through the hopelessly dirty crust of life into new clean regions. Balked, it per-

sistently returns to the breach; till at last a new light, a new constellation, a new god, answers its wild penetrations from afar. That is the emotional æsthetic man of to-day no less than the technical scientific one; that is every Columbus directed to every America; that is the spirit of the new western life; and the revelation of this single frustrate, battling, finding impulse finds us, here in the new world and its century, in the middle of our way again.

The End.



